

THE Atlantic

OCTOBER 2001 MONTHLY

Peace Is Hell

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a few thousand
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seriously bored
soldiers in Bosnia
strains the whole
U.S. Army.

A field report on
the Pax Americana
by William
Langewiesche

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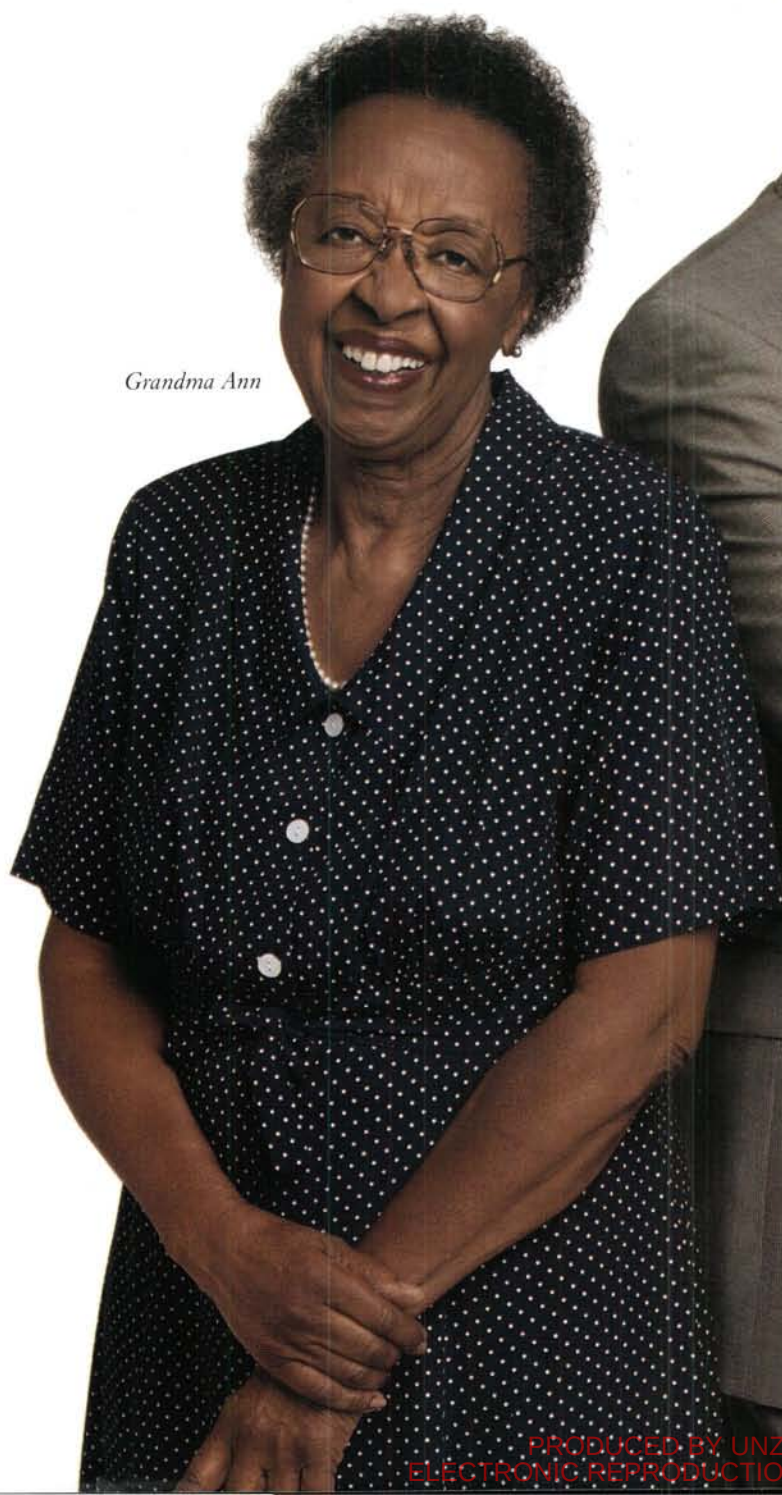
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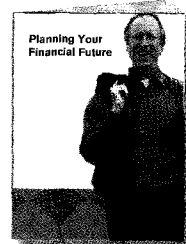
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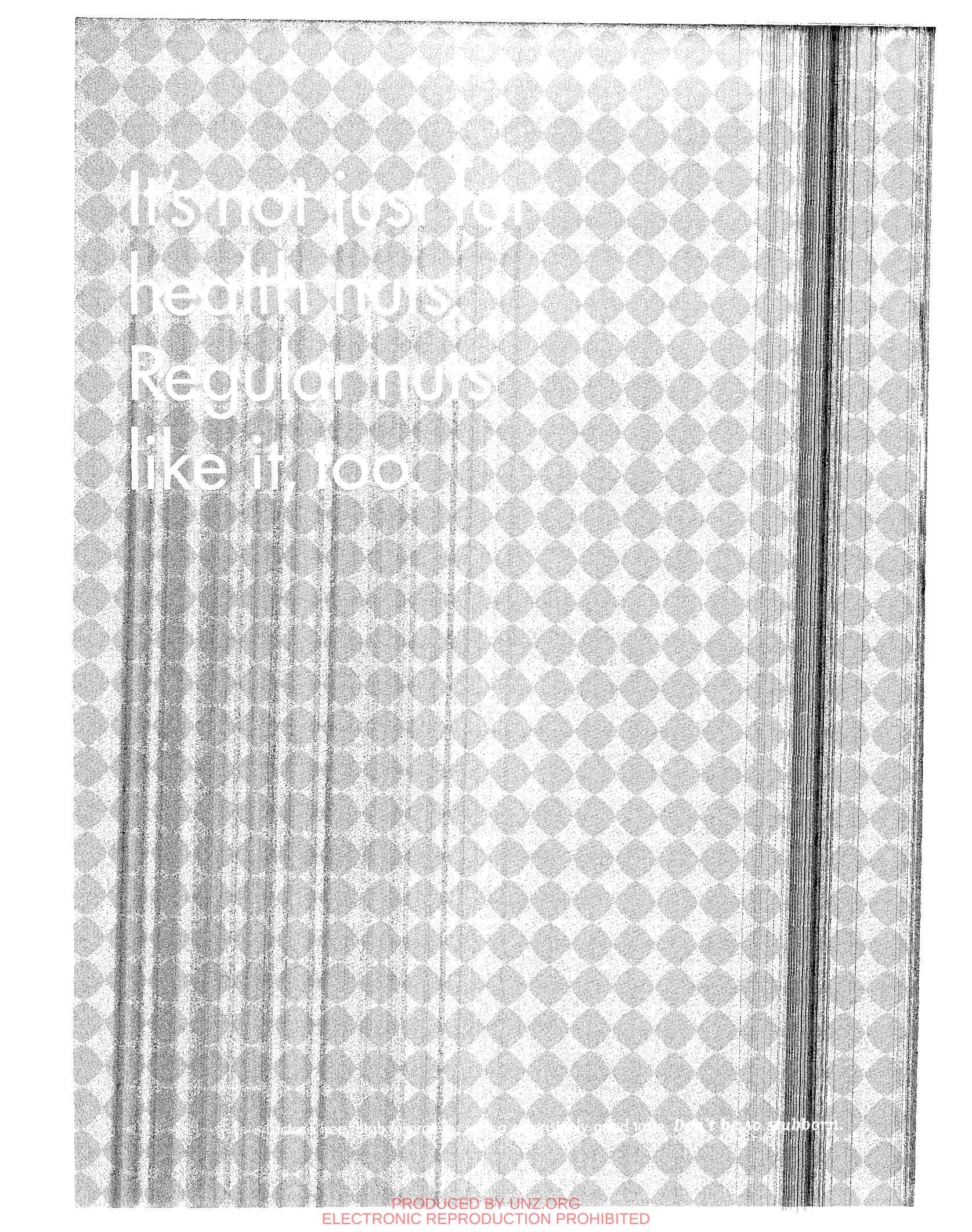
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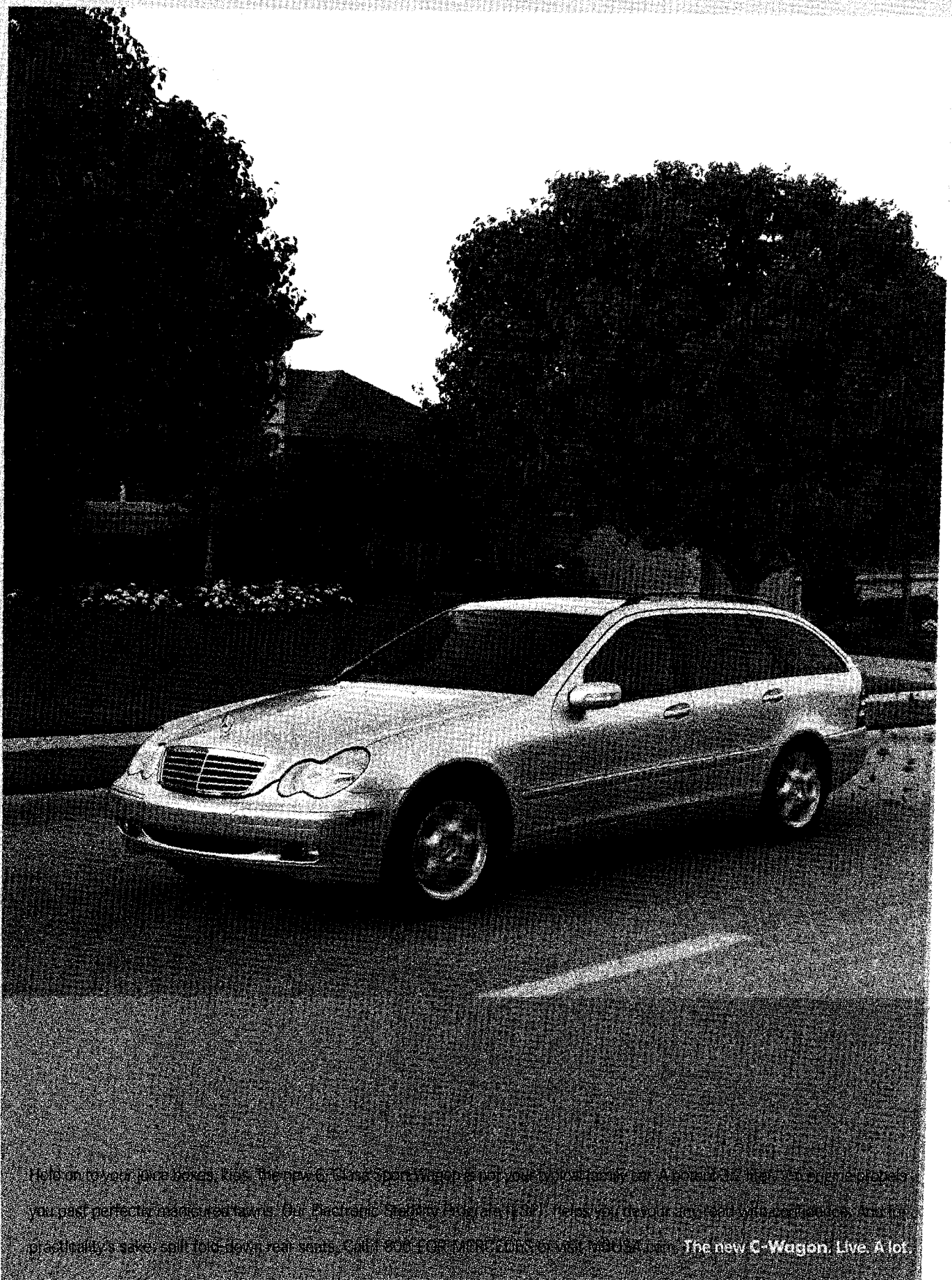
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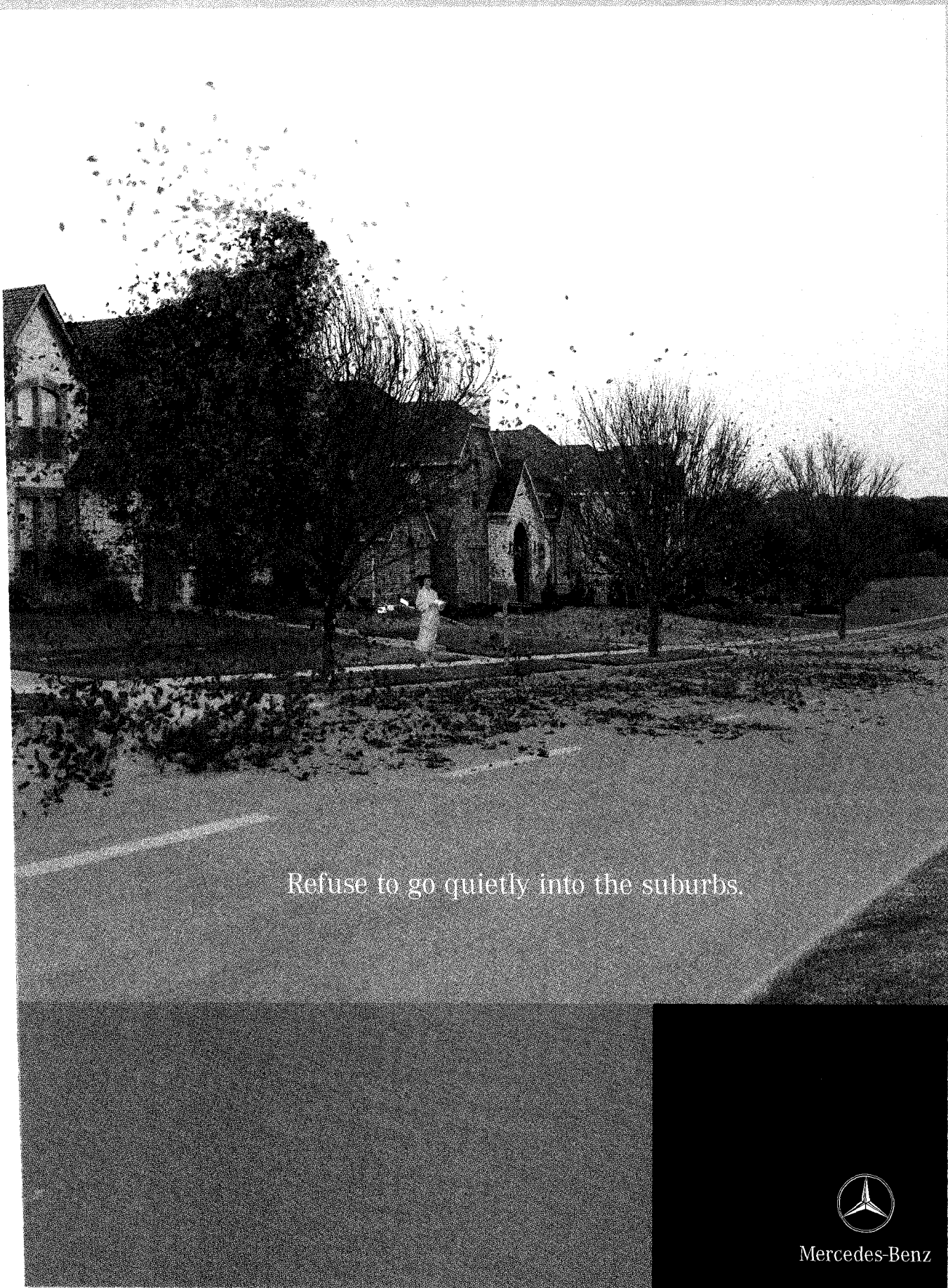
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Cover photo by William Langewiesche; heading drawings by Istvan Banyai



77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

The American military is, as William Langewiesche writes in this issue's cover story, a behemoth. The armed forces of the United States spend \$300 billion annually, and employ 1.4 million active-duty soldiers and 1.3 million in the National Guard and the reserves. The United States currently deploys some 260,000 military personnel overseas—about 50,000 on ships, and the remainder on bases in 141 countries.

This is the force that maintains the Pax Americana—a peculiar sort of peace. It is peculiar because it is not, in the conventional sense, imperial. America seeks a world in which American interests are paramount, but it does not covet anyone else's land, nor does it wish to subjugate any other peoples. The United States is deeply interested in extracting wealth from other lands and peoples, but in our enlightened time it is understood that the efficient way to do this is through commerce, not through the old, costly, dangerous, and tedious business of conquest, colonization, plunder, and taxation. AOL-Time-Warner-Disney-God will eventually get everybody's money, and no one will have to get shot.

In this happy state of affairs the American military's main role, most of the time, is simply to be very large and to be there, rather in the manner of a celebrity's bodyguard—to stand around in a tight T-shirt, occasionally flexing a bicep and giving the fisheye to wise guys. On the face of it, this would seem like good work if you can get it—certainly much less of a strain on the nerves than actually fighting.

Yet the cry from the military is constant: maintaining the peace around the world is too large a job, too difficult; the strain is in fact terrific. Langewiesche, who is a correspondent for *The Atlantic Monthly*, set out to study this apparent paradox. He used as a case study the NATO-led peacekeeping deployment in Bosnia. This is a small mission, requiring fewer than 4,000 U.S. soldiers on the ground at any one time. It is also, in military terms, a safe mission; no one has ever seriously tried to attack any of the NATO forces in Bosnia, and American forces have never engaged in combat there. Nevertheless, this is the mission that the military points to as a source of systemic strain that is causing a depression of morale and a decline in combat readiness.

Langewiesche examines and explains the reasons for this

in a comprehensive and compelling report, "Peace Is Hell," beginning on page 51. His analysis, rooted in extensive reporting in Bosnia and at Fort Stewart, Georgia, is an important contribution toward an understanding of the American role, and the limitations of that role, in a sole-superpower world. His report is concerned with the hardships and anxieties inherent in the job of world cop, but it is curiously optimistic. The problems that bedevil the U.S. military are like a rich man's worries: they come with being too big, too wealthy, too protected, and too little challenged. They are the problems that come with being the only giant left at the end of a hundred years' war.

That long conflict comprised two global hot wars, two regional hot wars, and nearly half a century of cold war, and it is astonishing that it ended as it did—not in totalitarian



William Langewiesche

triumph, not in atomic armageddon, but in a world where peace on a large scale reigns, where all the totalitarian systems of thought and most of the totalitarian regimes are vanquished, where free-market democracy is accepted as humanity's best hope and America as that democracy's essential protector. It could so easily have gone the other way.

A second feature in the October issue is a reminder of this. In "JFK's First-Strike Plan," Fred Kaplan reveals, through previously undisclosed documents, how seriously—very seriously—President John F. Kennedy, during the 1961 Berlin crisis, considered attacking the Soviet Union with a "limited" nuclear first strike. That moment in history, until now largely overlooked, was a point at least equal in danger to the later, and much more storied, Cuban missile crisis. What JFK considered—in great detail and in formal security sessions—was the single most dangerous idea of the nuclear age: the idea of a winnable nuclear war against the Soviet Union. Kaplan reports on what may have been the only time any American President seriously studied this option. That study revealed that a limited first strike might destroy all or most of the Soviet state's ability to retaliate (with a supposedly acceptable Russian casualty level of fewer than a million deaths); of course, the failure of a first strike to do the job would leave the United States open to devastating retaliation. JFK blinked, thank God. But no one knew he had blinked, thank God again. And so now we are free to enjoy the problems of peace. —MICHAEL KELLY

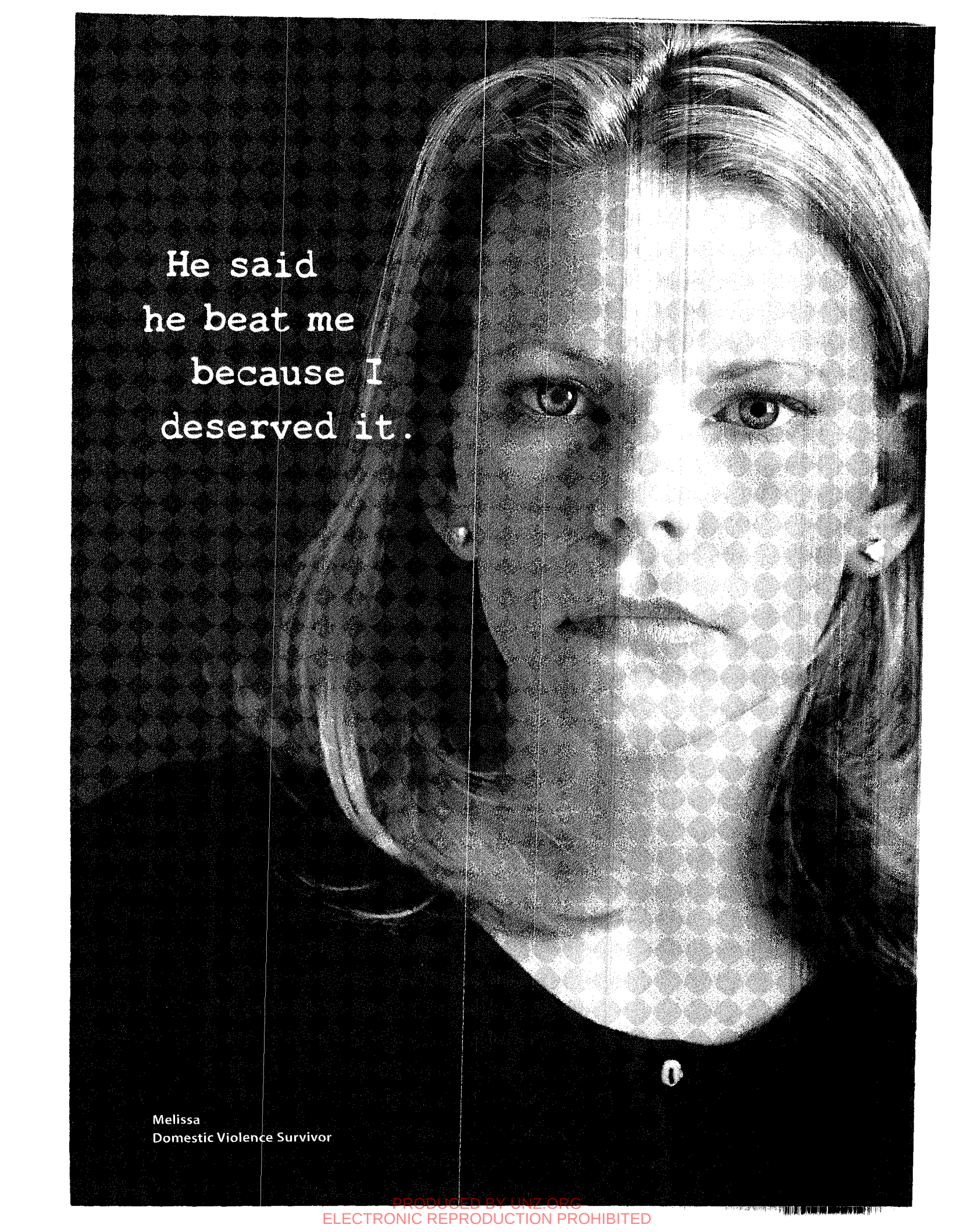
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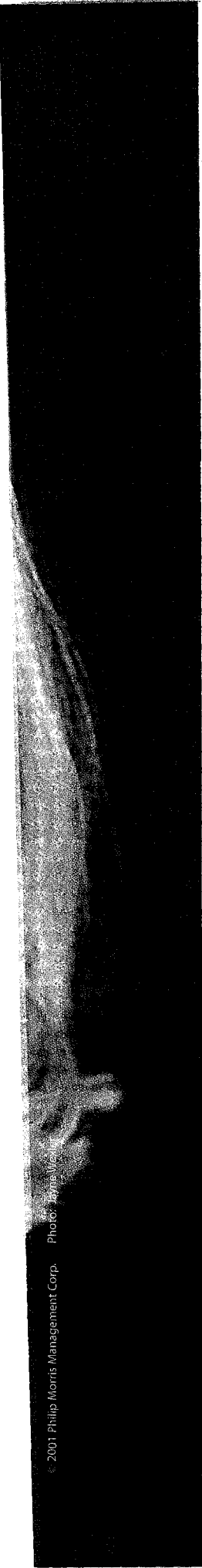
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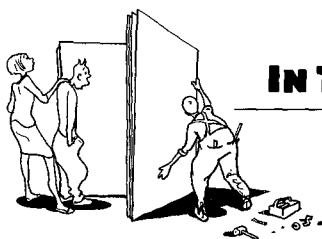
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IN THIS ISSUE

For the American military," writes the *Atlantic* correspondent **William Langewiesche** in "Peace Is Hell," this month's cover story, "the apparently trivial problem of peacekeeping has recently proved to be more difficult even than waging war." Accompanying U.S. peacekeeping troops from stateside training through deployment to Bosnia, Langewiesche reports on the military's peacetime identity crisis and on what it takes—from insect repellent to Humvees to diplomacy—to police the post-Cold War world. Langewiesche has written for *The Atlantic* for a decade, on topics ranging from the Sahara Desert to wine tasting.

What does death mean to those who have observed it closely? Through interviews with a paramedic, a social worker, an undertaker, and a mother, **Studs Terkel** ("Will the Circle Be Unbroken?") offers four perspectives on death and dying. Terkel is the author of eleven books, including *Working* (1974) and *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (1985), which won a Pulitzer Prize. He received the National Humanities Medal in 1997. "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" is drawn from his book of the same name, to be published next month by New Press.

Although Americans were unaware of it at the time, the 1961 Berlin crisis brought the United States and the USSR uncomfortably close to nuclear war. And, as **Fred Kaplan** ("JFK's First-Strike Plan") reveals, newly available documents show that the Kennedy Administration drew up detailed plans to launch a "rational" nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union. Kaplan, the New York bureau chief of *The Boston Globe*, was formerly the *Globe's* national-security correspondent and Moscow bureau chief. He is the author of *The Wizards of Armageddon* (1983), a history of American nuclear strategy.

Karen Shepard ("Popular Girls") is a part-time lecturer in English at Williams College, in Massachusetts. Her fiction has appeared in *Southwest Review* and *Mississippi Review*. Shepard's first novel, *An Empire of Women*, was published last year.

D. Ellis Dickerson ("Ask Dave About Tic-Tac-Toe") is a doctoral candidate in the English program at Florida State University. He has made crossword puzzles for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Games* magazine.

In Notes & Dispatches this month: **Wayne Curtis** reports from Norman, Oklahoma, on the increasingly hard-core pursuit of the ultimate tornado video; the former World Bank chief economist **Joseph Stiglitz** from Addis Ababa, on why Third World nations may have good reason to distrust the International Monetary Fund; **Michael Wise** from Strasbourg, on the European Parliament's exhausting monthly shuttling between Belgium and France; **James Fallows** from Livermore, California, on how a consortium of computer-chip manufacturers has revived Moore's Law; and **Gregg Easterbrook**, emerging from a reading of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, on the latest threats to C. S. Lewis's imaginary kingdom—in the form of corporate marketers and PC critics.

From the southerly reaches of Chile to the cheap seats in Dodger Stadium, *Atlantic* contributors **Ian Frazier**, **Jeffrey Tayler**, **Charles C. Mann**, **Benjamin** and **Christina Schwarz**, **William Langewiesche**, **Martha Spaulding**, and **James Fallows** find their candidates for "The Most Beautiful Place in the World."

Alice Furlaud ("Civility vs. *Civilité*") explicates the polite underside of French "rudeness." For sixteen years Furlaud reported from France for National Public Radio, the BBC, and the CBC. An

anthology of her radio features, *Air Fair*, was published in 1989.

Attu, the outermost of Alaska's Aleutian Islands, is the "Holy Grail of North American birding." **John Fitchen** ("Birding at the Edge") writes in his account of a nineteen-day pilgrimage to a hostile and all but inaccessible place. Fitchen, an academic physician as well as a birder, lives in Oregon.

Thomas Mallon ("Hustler With a Lyric Voice") reviews two new biographies of the libertine poet Edna St. Vincent Millay. Their intimate revelations, he predicts, will do little to shift the focus away from Millay's racy lifestyle and toward her ethereal love poems. Mallon is the author of the novel *Two Moons* (2000) and the collection *In Fact: Essays on Writers and Writing* (2001).

Perhaps no other period of French history has provoked as much critical inquiry as the German occupation of 1940–1944. **Eugen Weber** ("France's Downfall") reviews Julian Jackson's definitive study of one of France's bleakest and most controversial eras. Weber is a professor emeritus of modern European history at the University of California at Los Angeles. He is the author of numerous books, including *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth* (1992) and *Action Française* (1962).

Born to a family of German aristocrats just prior to World War I, and raised on the Côte d'Azur, the English writer Sybille Bedford saw the tumult of twentieth-century European history from an unusual and privileged vantage point. **Brooke Allen** ("An Observer of Catastrophe") looks at the strangeness and subtlety of four of Bedford's fictionalized memoirs on the occasion of their reissue. Allen is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New Criterion*.



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Fallows @large: *The Atlantic's* national e-mail correspondent engages the authors of new books on politics, technology, and the media—including Michael Lewis, the author of *Next: The Future Just Happened*, and Barbara Ehrenreich, the author of *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*.

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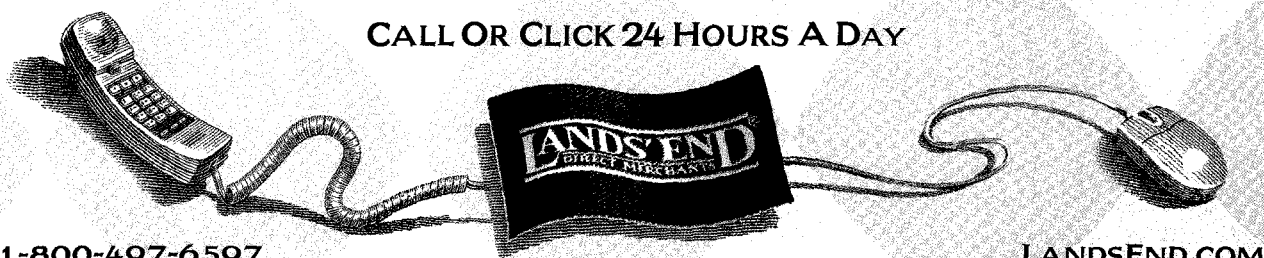
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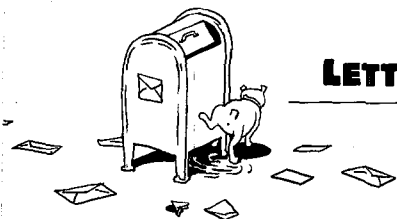
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Reader's Manifesto

Concerning B. R. Myers's blast of sort of smart but definitely annoying literary philistinism in "A Reader's Manifesto" (July/August *Atlantic*), I suppose I should feel guilty for the part I've played in the putative decline of American literary prose: I've edited and published two of his culprits, Don DeLillo and Paul Auster, and I'd do the same in a New York minute (sic) with the rest of his rogue's gallery. It may look to Myers from the distance of New Mexico that some powerful literary elite is operating out of midtown and downtown offices—hard at work, for its own obscure purposes, at the task of infecting American writing with bloat and obscurity. But from where I and my kind sit, the task of clearing out a decent space in our culture for the profound and beautiful books by these writers feels like a guerrilla action conducted against overwhelming forces of commercial dumbness. (Ruining American fiction is a full-time job, believe me.) And I know for a fact that the early books of every writer he cites struggled to find audiences and even publishers, and that these novelists were punished for the integrity of their styles and visions. Personal difficulties do not, of course, excuse or justify purposefully obscure or pretentious writing. But the idea that a challenging prose style of a complexity greater than John O'Hara's or Somerset Maugham's is the ticket to literary fame and fortune makes me laugh so hard that I can barely manage to add useless subordinate clauses and superfluous and inaccurate adjectives to this novel I'm editing.

Gerald Howard
Editorial Director, Broadway Books
New York, N.Y.

For the first page or so I naively assumed that B. R. Myers's seemingly petty effort to deflate the reputations

of some justly celebrated prose stylists (Proulx, McCarthy, DeLillo, and others) was actually serious. Once I caught on to the joke, however, that the author is satirizing a humorless, literal-minded critic with a tin ear, I chuckled my way to the end, delighted by the inspired raillery. Myers wickedly shows the pompous object of his satire to be utterly bewildered by imaginative readers who delight in the sight and sound of gorgeous sentences that, following Emily Dickinson's dictum, tell the truth but tell it slant. The satirist's hilarious fuddy-duddy emerges as the polar opposite of the sharp-eyed Carolyn See, who correctly recognizes that Annie Proulx is indeed, sentence by sentence, "the best prose stylist working in English now, bar none."

Marc Doussard
Chicago, Ill.

B. R. Myers professes to detest modern American fiction alone, but his arguments make him seem uncomfortable with the idea of fiction altogether. Look no further than his dismissal of a trademark Don DeLillo verbal exchange ("Are the men in hacking jackets? What's a hacking jacket?") with the complaint "no real person would utter those last two questions in sequence." Imagine that! Fictional characters talking as if they're not real! It's almost as if DeLillo made the whole thing up!

Myers really gives himself away when he later complains that "we are never told" the identity of a mysterious "something large in scope and content" to which a character in *White Noise* refers. This is the classic complaint against modernism, so quaint it's almost funny. Many critics can't get over the fact that Kafka didn't tell us what Joseph K was accused of, that we don't really know what Molly Bloom was saying "yes" to in Gibraltar, that Jean Rhys never lets us see why her heroines are depressed or lonely and never sug-

gests a silver-bullet remedy for their pain. This was an interesting line of inquiry in 1930, when mass war, mass media, and melting pots were new phenomena. But what is it doing in *The Atlantic* in 2001?

If Myers wants concise answers to the questions a book raises, why is he reading fiction? A philosophical tract or essay will explicitly answer questions, as will an advice column or a car owner's manual. The gift of fiction is that it casts philosophical and moral conundrums in occluded images, half-finished conversations, and muddy juxtapositions that can't be reduced to a neat one-sentence argument. The second DeLillo puts a name to the "something large in scope and content," it becomes just another catchphrase to be repeated and discarded. The second the obviousness of the answers a novel gives outweighs the quality of the questions it raises, you're better off reading Cliffs Notes.

Marc Doussard
Chicago, Ill.

After reading George Singleton's wonderful short story in the July/August issue, "Show-and-Tell" (a title resurrecting Chekhov's admonition to writers to show and not tell), a story not marked by brilliance or stylistic innovation, but a story that, nevertheless, had me laughing so hard I had to reread aloud parts of it to my husband, who also laughed, I want to tell B. R. Myers not to "despair of ever seeing a return" to unaffected prose.

Judy Loest
Knoxville, Tenn.

I find Annie Proulx's diction refreshing. Sentences like "furious dabs of tulips stuttering in gardens" are impressionistic word pictures. What would you have her say? "A bunch of tulips blowing in the wind?" Snore.

Julia Scheeres
San Francisco, Calif.

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Aparaphrase of the painter Barnett Neumann, might put B. R. Myers's essay in perspective: "Art criticism is to art what ornithology is to birds."

John Correll
Atlanta, Ga.

"Call me Ishmael." You call that a sentence?!?

Edward Tarkington
Tallahassee, Fla.

B. R. Myers replies:

In "A Reader's Manifesto" I wrote that today's literary prose is "so repetitive, so elementary in its syntax, and so numbing in its overuse of wordplay that it often demands less concentration than the average 'genre' novel." To prove this point I offered dozens of excerpts, none of which could be described as difficult by anyone over the age of twelve. Gerald Howard knows all this, but he also knows that it is easier to cry philistine than to explain just what is so profound about the work of Don DeLillo and Paul Auster. As for Mr. Howard's reference to "commercial dumbness," this must be what aims at selling

affordable paperbacks in volume, as opposed to the commercial smartness of pricing artily slender hardbacks at \$22.95 each.

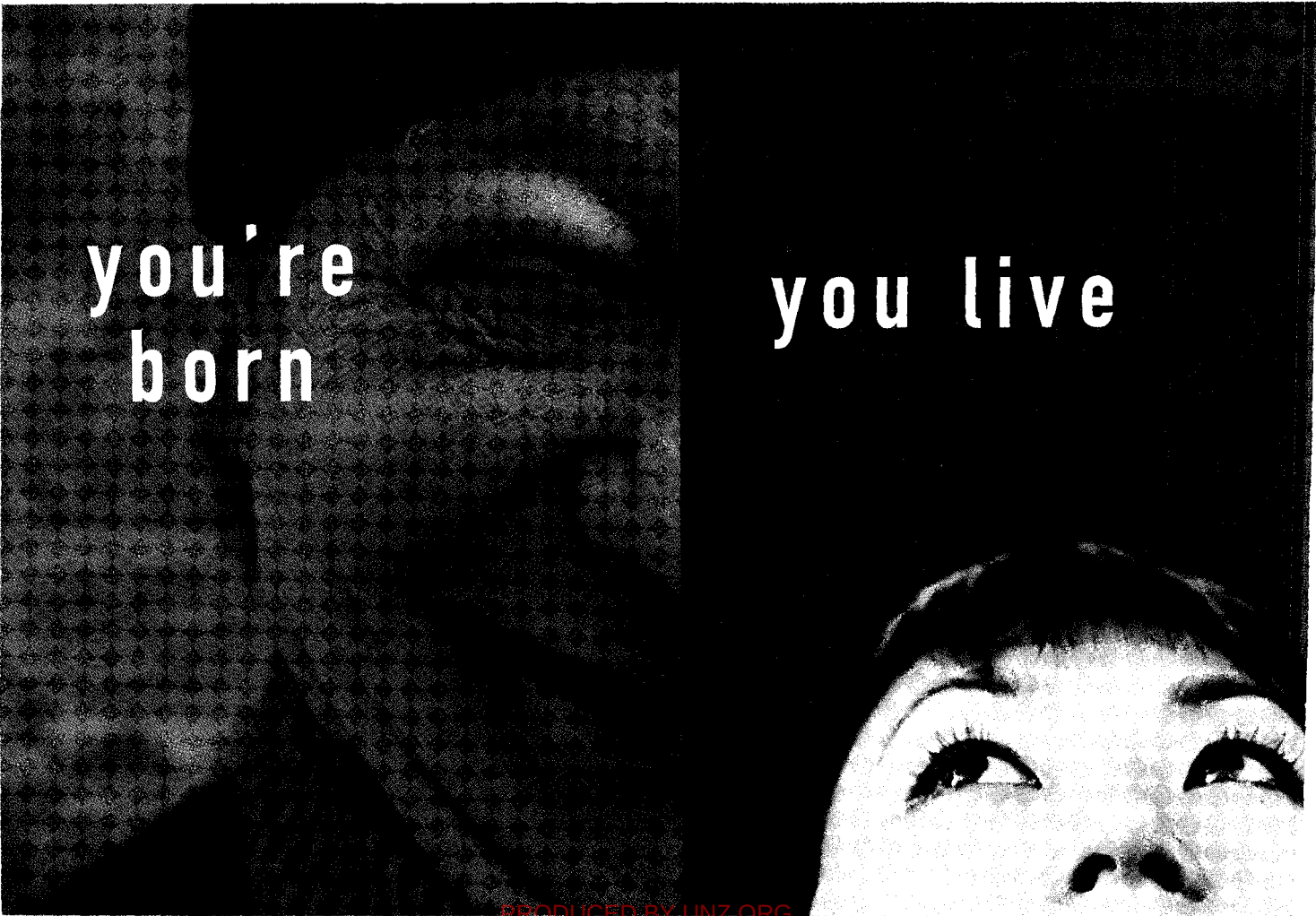
Marc Doussard tries to equate obfuscation with ambiguity, the better to claim that my real gripe is with modernism in general. Nice try; but as Nabokov wrote, art is always specific. Literature need not answer every question it raises, but the questions themselves should be clear. Kafka's description of Joseph K's plight is precise, lucid, and terrifyingly believable. DeLillo, in contrast, has his characters make vague claims to momentous premonitions, in the hope that we will read more into this vagueness than he is capable of thinking. Mr. Doussard is obviously very impressed by DeLillo's intimation that there exists a greater reality behind the world of appearances, but the rest of us know that this idea is as old as civilization itself. We expect an allegedly intellectual novelist to come up with more than the pronouncement that "something large in scope and content" attaches to personal possessions. And for all its mannerisms, *White Noise* is a conventionally plotted novel that tries hard to gen-

erate suspense over its characters' fate. The fact that Jack and his family are impossible to take seriously is therefore a serious flaw even from a modernist standpoint.

The Good Fight

Benjamin Schwarz is correct in criticizing Stephen Ambrose for skewing his account by lauding the American fighting man at the expense of the Soviet soldier ("The Real War," June *Atlantic*). One cannot stand in the cemetery outside St. Petersburg, in which 50,000 to a million Russians are buried, having been starved or bombarded to death during the Siege of Leningrad, and not be moved by the terrible suffering endured by the Russian people during World War II.

But I think Schwarz errs in seeming to endorse John Erickson's calling what was in fact a world conflagration "Stalin's War." In terms of total casualties, the Soviet Union undoubtedly suffered the most. But the war on the Eastern Front was an Orwellian battle between two monstrous tyrannies. (Stalin mur-



you're
born

you live

dered or imprisoned millions of his own people in Russia's most desperate hour, even as the Germans advanced.) The people who died there, no matter how bravely they fought, were forced to be there, under penalty of death. (Stalin went so far as to have sharpshooters stationed behind the battle lines to shoot any who wavered.)

One of Ambrose's main themes is this: How do you mobilize the anti-authoritarian individualists of a slumbering and isolationist democracy with a tiny standing army to fight distant enemies on the other side of vast oceans without resorting to totalitarian means?

In that sense the Anglo-American triumph was disproportionately noble. Most of the British and U.S. soldiers did not want to fight but did. Few free men chose to be heroes, yet thousands fought and gave their lives with astonishing heroism. One cannot read about the mountain fighting in Italy, the frost-bitten men holding back the "bulge" in the Ardennes, or the Marines butchered but prevailing in the volcanic black sands

of Iwo Jima without finding one's admiration conquering one's cynicism. I have stood on the heights overlooking Omaha Beach and Pointe du Hoc, and I still cannot understand why free men, in a war so far from home, chose to scale those cliffs under the most withering fire, and kept coming and coming despite horrifying casualties.

*R. C. Hughes
New York, N.Y.*

Benjamin Schwarz wrote a masterly review of Stephen Ambrose's book *The Good Fight*, which was written to appeal to young adults. As a veteran of World War II who served in the U.S. Navy from December of 1941 to February of 1946, and as a student of world history, I'm amazed that Ambrose would have neglected to mention the role that Russia played in defeating the Nazis. Nowhere in *The Good Fight* is there any mention of Stalingrad, where the Nazis were stopped for the first time, or of the greatest tank battle of World War II, at Kursk, where the vaunted

Nazi panzer divisions were decimated.

My sincere appreciation and thanks to Schwarz for his perceptive and even-handed review, in which he pointed out, "If readers are old enough to study an event that involved the deaths of more than 60 million people, they are old enough to learn that one studies history not to simplify issues but to illuminate their complexities."

*Frank Levin
Encino, Calif.*

I think Benjamin Schwarz greatly understates the Western Allies' contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany by overemphasizing the tremendous casualty and deployment statistics of the Germans and the Soviets on the Eastern Front. To even begin to assess what credit is due to one Allied nation or another, one must also factor in the effects of the American Lend-Lease program and of the Western Allies' air war over Germany. For instance, the vast majority of the Soviet army's supply vehicles were American-supplied trucks and jeeps, to-



you die

wait, what
was that middle
part again?

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taling more than half a million vehicles. These vehicles allowed Soviet ground forces to become almost fully mechanized (unlike their foe), thus making possible the deep penetration and encirclement techniques used by the Soviet generals in the last two years of the war.

In addition, American food supplies were crucial to the Soviets, because German forces occupied large swaths of Ukraine, a vital agricultural region, during many planting and harvesting periods. And finally, the dramatic increase in the Soviet forces' combat effectiveness as the war went on was due in no small part to the heavy importation of American communications equipment, which allowed the Soviets to coordinate large joint-force operations over vast expanses of territory.

As for the Western Allies' air war over Europe, the relatively small numbers of casualties suffered or inflicted by both Allied and German forces tells only a fraction of the story. The bombing campaign exacted terrible damage on Germany's factories, its transportation network, its population, and its already very limited fuel-production capacity. In addition, from 1943 onward Germany was forced to drastically reduce the number of air units dedicated to the Russian front. To cite just one statistic: by September of 1944 roughly 80 percent of German air units were devoted to the air war over Germany. Consequently, Germany's highly effective blitzkrieg, used mercilessly in the first two years of the war, was all but abandoned as the war went on, because the tactic was dependent on Germany's near absolute air superiority.

*John McKinzey
Los Angeles, Calif.*

Nothing is good about war, but to denigrate the reason the soldiers fought is reprehensible. I'll take Tom Brokaw any day.

*Jeanne Mussekwhite
Ooltewah, Tenn.*

Benjamin Schwarz replies:

R. C. Hughes is right that Stalin was a very bad man, but in my piece I characterized Stalin's government as "the second most hideous regime in history [after Nazi Germany]." Hughes is also unfair to the millions

of Red Army officers and soldiers killed during the war. Most fought neither for the "cause" of anti-fascism nor because Stalin forced them to but because the German conflict on the Eastern Front was essentially a war of extermination, and they recognized that were they to lose, their homeland would be ravaged, their culture uprooted, and their families killed or enslaved.

*John McKinzey is correct: Lend-Lease aid greatly helped the Soviet war effort (and he shouldn't neglect the many British sailors who lost their lives ferrying U.S. and British materiel to the Soviets). But his argument is overstated and a bit unseemly. Giving material aid is not the same as fighting and dying, and we rightly applaud a fighter in the ring more than we do his dietician. ("The allies bought the German defeat with Russian blood and paid in Spam," the historian Brian Moynahan has remarked.) Lend-Lease assistance didn't arrive in sufficient quantity to help the Soviets stave off defeat in the critical period 1941–1942. And though Chevrolet, Dodge, and Ford trucks enormously helped the Red Army to realize its planners' vision of deep operations, it was Soviet officers and soldiers who brilliantly performed the encirclements and deep penetrations of Operation Bagration, which nearly all military historians regard as constituting the most innovative and devastating display of the art of operations in the entire war. Although counterfactual history is always a thorny endeavor, the foremost English-language historian of the Eastern Front, Colonel David M. Glantz (U.S. Army, retired), and his co-author, Jonathan House, put Lend-Lease aid into proper perspective in *When Titans Clashed*, the definitive operational history of the Soviet-German war: "Left to their own devices, Stalin and his commanders might have taken 12 to 18 months longer to finish off the Wehrmacht." I've written elsewhere about the importance of the Allied air campaign against Germany, and I don't dispute Mr. McKinzey's points; but, as I'm sure he'd agree, World War II in Europe was not won by air power.*

Air Travel

James Fallows ("Freedom of the Skies," June *Atlantic*) describes a promising new world of low-cost, reliable, and relatively safe small planes

utilizing our many local airports for faster and more efficient travel. Yet we as a nation continue to ignore or minimally support the most logical and cost-effective way of moving people—high-speed rail. All those hub-and-spoke airline systems could be reduced to just hubs with high-speed rail providing services from city center to city center along an interconnected web of rail-service spokes. The most obvious way to implement this would be to adapt the interstate-highway system to accommodate a similarly advanced mode of elevated high-speed rail connecting every town and city on the interstate with one another and the major airline hubs.

In California the High Speed Rail Authority has made an intensive study that demonstrates the cost-effective and time/congestion saving advantages of rail travel over commuter-airline service. Its analysis even demonstrates high-speed rail operating at a profit! And high-speed rail is not subject to delays from fog, snow, or thunderstorm, nor does it need a parachute should the engineer have a sudden heart attack. Nor are you apt to lose your luggage, which you can simply carry aboard yourself. Finally, the cost of one nonpolluting, low-noise, far more comfortable high-speed train set is less than half the cost of a single small airliner. Are the Germans, Japanese, British, and French that much smarter than we are?

*Mike Evans
Anderson, Calif.*

The following is, in my opinion, a serious omission by James Fallows in his article regarding the future of air transportation.

The CarterCopter is a vertical-take-off-and-landing aircraft projected to cruise at 400 mph at 50,000 feet (230 mph at sea level). It uses a rotor for vertical takeoff and landing and a small wing for high-speed cruise. The rotor is powered only prior to takeoff and is always in auto-rotation during flight, like an autogyro (also known as a gyrocopter). In high-speed flight the rotor is basically unloaded, so there is no retreating blade stall, and the rotor rpm is low, to reduce drag. The CarterCopter offers the speed and efficiency of a fixed-wing

aircraft and the off-airport abilities of a helicopter—all with much less complexity than tiltrotor aircraft and other vectored-thrust aircraft such as the Harrier.

*Ints Luters
Seattle, Wash.*

I was disappointed by the scant attention James Fallows paid to the problems faced by small airports throughout the country. Even if smaller airplanes (say, with a capacity of four to ten passengers) can be made perfectly safe, they will not be able to relieve the overcrowding that exists on the major airports' runways if no other airports are available. As Fallows noted, more than 5,000 small airports, if effectively employed, could form the basis for an efficient network of intercity air transportation. But the Federal Aviation Administration has taken a laissez-faire attitude regarding the survival of almost all these airports, especially privately owned airports. In many cases local politics, often dominated by anti-airport groups focused on local issues and not on our national transportation system, have determined which airports survive and which fall victim to developers' surveying stakes. This is puzzling, because a regional-airport program, involving existing small airports and the enhanced use of commuter-sized aircraft at these airports, is a feasible goal, whereas adding new airports (especially here in the Northeast) is not.

*Robert Checchio
Dunellen, N.J.*

James Fallows replies:

I like trains about as much as I like airplanes, and I agree with Mike Evans that high-speed train service has been neglected. Trains work best when a large number of people live in a concentrated area and commute back and forth along densely traveled routes. The corridor between Boston and Washington is the obvious example in the United States. Better, faster trains would do more to improve travel along the mid-Atlantic corridor than would a fleet of small planes. The same is true for the San Francisco Bay Area and some other areas.

Trains do not make as much sense when people live in widely dispersed settlements or when small numbers of travelers want

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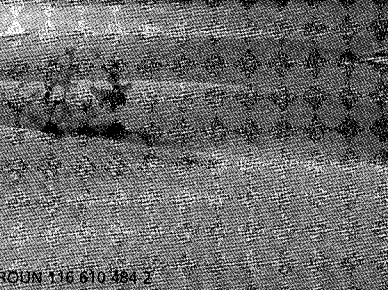
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to go to any given destination. Laying and maintaining enough track, and running trains frequently enough, to allow a family in Cheyenne to travel conveniently to San Diego—and another family to go to Tulsa—is not as practical as better small-plane connections between those two points. The Germans, the Japanese, and others may or may not be smarter than we are: they live in countries with settlement patterns different from those of most of the United States.

I hope that the CarterCopter proves practical, effective, and profitable, and that the same is true of the Moller Skycar and other highly innovative air-travel devices. The projects I discussed were closely enough linked to existing, proven technology to pass regulatory and certification tests in the short run, while having a potentially broad impact on travel patterns.

Like Robert Checcio, I am sorry whenever a small airport closes, since this is a one-way process: virtually never are they re-opened, or new ones built. But I think most of the traveling public would be amazed at the number of airports that still exist—and would view them as something other than noisy nuisances if they became part of a transportation system that benefited ordinary travelers.

Chain Bookstores

I was interested in Brooke Allen's "Two—Make That Three—Cheers for the Chain Bookstores" (July/August *Atlantic*), even though Canadians have a very different perception of the chains. Here the direst predictions have come to pass. Chapters, our version of Barnes & Noble, aggressively saturated the book market with box stores, often building large outlets across the street from successful independents. Once Chapters had driven much of its competition out of business, its large capital costs caught up with it. The chain responded with some very underhanded practices. It delayed payments to suppliers, returned merchandise in unprecedented numbers, and tried to make publishers take back books that were dog-eared or coffee-stained. Since Chapters's sales represented such a large portion of the Canadian book market, publishers were forced to let the company do as it wished. As a result, many struggling writers are

not being paid by the cash-starved small presses, which had to trim their lists in a desperate effort to survive.

Edward Zuk
Surrey, B.C.

I think Brooke Allen is missing the point. Independent bookstores can compete with chains on a level playing field. The point is that chains want it all. Barnes & Noble publishes a large number of titles under its own imprint which are not available to other bookstores. Eventually the chains will be dictating what is published and what is not, or they will be doing the publishing themselves.

Elaine Hines
Renaissance Books
Springfield, Mo.

Brooke Allen claims that one of the advantages of the big chain bookstores is their ability to order a book if they don't have it in stock—as if this were a power unique to the chains and thus a mark of their superiority over small stores. Not so! *All* bookstores can place orders for you, and have always been able to.

Jana Hollingsworth
Seattle, Wash.

Brooke Allen replies:

I am not at all familiar with the situation in Canada, but if it is as Edward Zuk describes, then it is indeed the sort of disaster that people in the United States feared the chains would set off. So far that has not been our experience here. As I wrote in the article, the future here for both independents and chains is very uncertain, considering the changes that e-books, books-on-demand, Amazon, and other Internet services are likely to wreak on the retail business.

To address Elaine Hines's points: In many searches through Barnes & Noble, I have found not "a large number of titles" published under its imprint but a rather limited list of classics old enough to be in the public domain, all sold on one table or stand. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Barnes & Noble has no plans to become a major force in publishing. Although no one knows what the future will bring, the chains show no signs as yet of determining or even influencing what is published in the United States.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW



THEATER

ABBA Returns

FILM

Michael Cuesta's *L.I.E.*

POPULAR MUSIC

A Slice of Heaven

JAZZ

Lady Day and Lady Di

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THEATER

by John Istel

THE COMPANY OF WOMEN

Annie Weisman, a San Diego native, saw her first play produced by the California Young Playwrights Project at Old Globe Theatre about ten years ago. She was seventeen. This summer, she returned to her hometown as one of the country's most promising young playwrights to watch her acerbic comedy about southern California cheerleaders, *Be Aggressive*, debut at the La Jolla Playhouse. In October, Costa Mesa's South Coast Repertory cashes in on its commission to Weisman when it opens its Second Stage season with the world premiere of Weisman's *Hold Please*. Her script reads like a cross between *Sex in the City* and a work by Neil LaBute, and shows off Weisman's trademark ear for the vernacular of the most recent generation to enter the American workforce. In the edgy comedy, four female "Reception Technicians" in a faceless corporation, although of various ages and experiences, compete for everything from the boss's attention to the coffee creamer to the heart-shaped pillow they must hug be-

fore expressing feelings during an encounter session. Finally, they're forced to compete in an efficiency test for the single remaining job. One of the unlucky contestants decides to become a hip-hop artist and offers a sample of her "Secretary Rap": "I'll staple you shut like Carni Wilson's belly / Stop your attempt at talkin' like a militant Israeli / I'll turn you over face down and fax you to Japan / Then scan your ass digitally and do it all again." In Weisman's world, even the losers get a last laugh. SCR tops off October, however, with a winner: the world premiere of *Nostalgia*, a haunting play, set in Wales, by Londoner Lucinda Coxon.



LOUISE PITRE,
IN MAMMA MIA

JOAN MARCUS

GREEK LOVE

Lately, stages seem glutted by Greek tragedies. Maybe it's because the millennia-old potboilers can compete with murderous Houston moms, adulterous men in positions of power, and other recent lurid news items. In Washington, D.C., two theaters have opened their seasons with Greek epics. Arena Stage offers *Agamemnon and His Daughters*, with Molly Smith directing Kenneth Cavander's adaptation. Across town, the Shakespeare Theatre celebrates Michael Kahn's fifteenth-anniversary season with the entire *Oedipus* trilogy, starring Avery Brooks headlining the all-African-American cast. But few recent adaptations have hit the jugular of contemporary culture like *Big Love*, Charles L. Mee's remarkable revision of Aeschylus's *The Suppliants*. The original, one of the oldest extant plays in Western civilization, was only the first part of a trilogy. That left the provocative playwright to make up his own ending based on existing fragments and third-party commentary. The story centers on fifty sisters forcibly engaged to marry fifty cousins. The brides-to-be flee into exile, are hunted down by the men, and, when faced with no other options, make a pact to murder their husbands on their wedding night. They all do—save a sole sister who falls for her fiancé. *Big Love*, reset in present-day Italy, made an audacious debut at the Actors Theatre of Louisville's Humana Festival, in a production, directed by Les Waters, that featured a 1960s pop-laden soundtrack, a bright blue wrestling mat floor, and a wild, flailing physicality that perfectly embodied this epic battle of the sexes. Waters restaged the acclaimed production in Berkeley this spring, and it arrives in mid-October at the Goodman Theatre, in Chicago, before moving on to the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival in late November.

SWEDISH NIGHTINGALE

"Like most people, when I heard they were making a musical called *Mamma Mia*, based on the songs of ABBA, I pictured some terrible, tacky revue," says Louise Pitre, the award-winning Canadian actress and singer. Pitre discovered how wrong she was when she was cast in the title role for the mega-musical's North American tour. "Director Phyllida Lloyd wasn't looking for the typical musical-theater approach to acting; she treats this as a Shakespearean play, for God's sake." That approach, combined with Pitre's earthy alto, lends just the right amount of weight to this fluffernutter phenomenon. *Mamma Mia* takes a soap dish of a story and cleverly sews it tight with a string of twenty-two songs by Bennie Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the 1970s Swedish pop group. Pitre plays Donna, a single mother whose daughter, Sophie, is getting married. Sophie wants to know who her father is, and she invites three likely candidates to the ceremony, much to her mother's horror. The show opens on Broadway this month, already having broken sales records in London and across this continent. "It's mind-blowing," says Pitre. "I've never played to such packed houses. People just stand up with the most amazing, ridiculous smiles and yell like they're at some sporting event." Clearly, ABBA's fans are flocking, but Pitre thinks she knows another reason for the show's success. "Part of the musical's appeal is that it has a woman in her forties as the main character. It's like real life. Not everybody's pretty and sweet with a little soprano voice and in love all the time," she says. "That's not me. I can sing lower than most guys I know."

JOHN ISTEL IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF STAGEBILL.



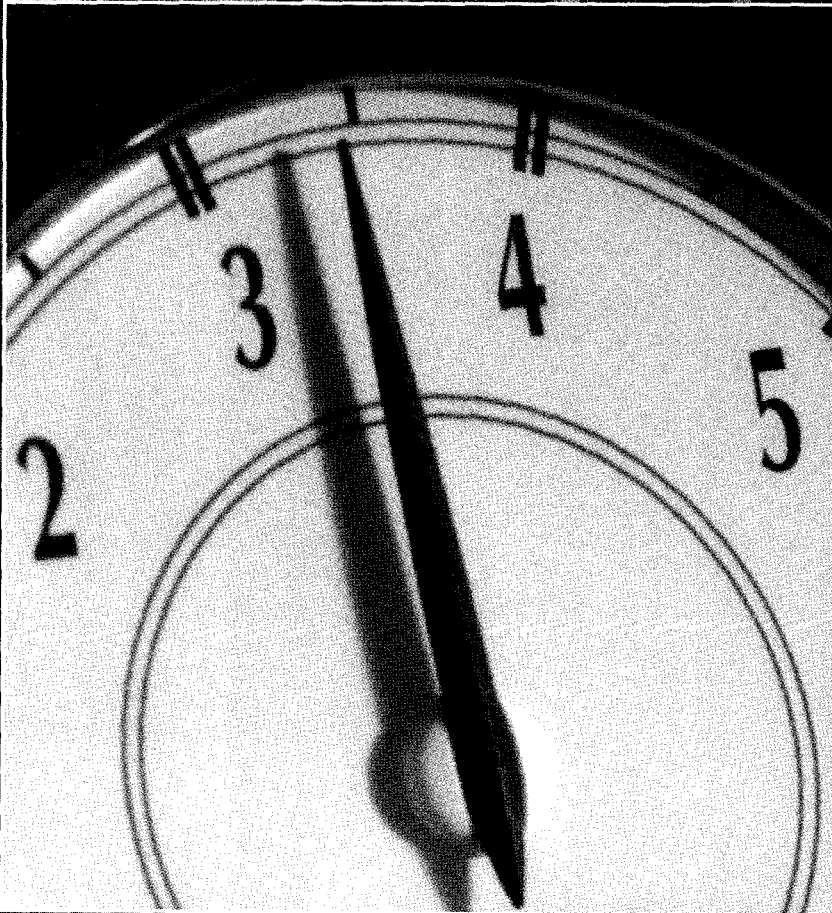
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Drive = Love

FILM

by Ella Taylor

SINS OF THE FATHER

Set in Liverpool, England, in the 1930s, Stephen Frears's new film, *Liam*, observes the impact of the Depression and rumors of war on an impoverished Catholic family, as seen through the eyes of its youngest child, a pinched-looking boy (movingly played by Anthony Borrows) with a severe stammer brought on by dark intimations of sin. When Dad (played with magnificently grim truculence by Ian Hart) loses his job, he grows increasingly bitter and ashamed that his eldest son, a socialist, is the breadwinner, while his daughter must work as maid to a wealthy Jewish matron. Dad turns for solace to drink and a nascent Fascist movement, with tragic consequences for the whole family. The situation is primed for religious and political extremity—and for the florid screenwriting of Jimmy McGovern, which is jarringly at odds with Frears's tactful, poetic direction. McGovern (who wrote the appallingly disingenuous *Priest* and the rather better television series *Cracker*) based the story on his own childhood experiences, and though the movie is nothing if not heartfelt, it is rich in contradictions of which, at the most charitable estimate, he seems unaware. At a time when the vast majority of English Jews were every bit as poor as the Catholics, Jews are represented in this film by an intransigent rent collector, a grasping pawnbroker, and the shipyard owner who's responsible for Dad losing his job. Similarly, the Catholic Church appears to be peopled solely by tub-thumping priests and scary schoolmarm threatening fire and brimstone for every small infraction. If that's not stacking the deck, I don't know what is.

LOT 47 FILMS



PAUL FRANKLIN DANO
AS HOWIE, IN *L.I.E.*

DEATH ON THE HIGHWAY

Michael Cuesta is not the first to find poetry in Long Island (or to quote Walt Whitman in his first movie), but he's surely one of the first to wax lyrical about thuggery, sexual exploitation, and parental neglect in that suburban idyll. Inspired—if that's the word—by a couple of famous real-life deaths (singer/songwriter Harry Chapin and director Alan Pakula) on the Long Island Expressway, *L.I.E.* begins and ends with an adolescent boy, Howie, whose mother died in the same way, climbing out onto a bridge and teetering above the freeway. In between you will be moved to feel sympathy not only for Howie (Paul Franklin Dano), but for his feckless fellow delinquents; for the father (Bruce Altman), who is so wrapped up in his legal troubles that he fails to notice how badly his son is hurting; and even for a literate local pedophile, Big John Harrigan (played with quiet brilliance by the Irish actor Brian Cox). Yet there's nothing remotely self-indulgent or sentimental about the movie, which stubbornly resists categorization as a "gay movie" or a "teen drama"—just as its characters, with their plausibly opaque motivations, resist being typed as perverts, hoods, or dysfunction-

al dads. It hardly matters that the expressway deaths don't quite hold up as metaphors for the dangers that threaten Howie's fragile hold on his identity. Beautifully shot and with a literate screenplay by Stephen M. Ryder, Cuesta, and Gerald Cuesta, *L.I.E.* evokes with candor and delicacy a suburban world filled in equal parts with tenderness and danger.

TEMPORARY MEASURES

Jacob and Josh Kornbluth's charming first feature must be one of the more original appreciations of commitment phobia. Certainly it's one of the most eccentric. *Haiku Tunnel* poses the question, To temp or not to temp? The movie is worked up from a 1990 monologue by Josh Kornbluth, whose anxious, owlish face and tubby body encased in a succession of shirts, each louder than the one before, serve him well in his role as the nerdy, exemplary temp who beats all deadlines and never steals the office equipment or uses the phone for private calls. Until, that

is, a terrifyingly put-together managerial gorgon at the S & M law firm offers him the opportunity to "go perm." (The manager is played by the performance artist Helen Shumaker, who has a day job as a secretary.) Realizing that his whole life is an avoidance of one kind or another—replete with strategically aborted romances and unfinished novels—Josh bites the bullet, only to find that his skills desert him overnight, and, while desperately trying to finish the "seventeen important letters" his boss has given him to type up and mail, he gets deeper and deeper

into trouble. Kornbluth has a wonderfully sharp ear for the absurd excesses of contemporary office lingo and culture. He and most of his cast have worked for years as temps, and his real-life boss, on whom the movie boss was closely modeled, saw the show and loved it. The movie draws amusingly pointed parallels between the dilemmas of temping and marriage: in both, permanence offers benefits and security, while temping is all freedom and no stability.

ELLA TAYLOR IS A FILM CRITIC FOR LA WEEKLY.

POPULAR MUSIC & JAZZ

by Bob Blumenthal and Charles M. Young

SENSITIVE STANDARDS

Among many jazz fans, commercial success is the ultimate sin, which makes Diana Krall jazz's primary sinner of the moment. A singer/pianist who first attracted attention five years ago with her homage to the Nat King Cole trio, *All for You* (Impulse!), then catapulted to the pop charts and an album of the year Grammy nomination for her first effort with orchestral backing, *When I Look in Your Eyes* (Verve), Krall has parlayed a smoky timbre, a relaxed sense of time, and excellent taste in material into a package of surprisingly widespread appeal. Her new collection, *The Look of Love* (Verve), aspires to the whispered seductiveness of João Gilberto, with arranger Claus Ogerman even recycling a couple of orchestrations that he fashioned for the bossa nova pioneer a quarter century ago. While no one can match Gilberto for intimate spell-weaving, Krall holds her own, primarily because her sensitivity as both singer and player are made for such standards as "I Remember You," "The Night We Called It a Day," and "Cry Me a River." Rather than employing a hard sell, she eases into these ballads and allows their strengths to guide the performances. It also helps that, on four tracks, Krall has reunited with the guitarist Russell Malone, who spent years as a linchpin in Krall's touring trio before setting off to front his own band. —B.B.

BOB BLUMENTHAL IS A JAZZ CRITIC FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE. CHARLES M. YOUNG REVIEWS MUSIC FOR PLAYBOY AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND FOR ALLMUSIC.COM.



BILLIE HOLIDAY

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

PSYCHEDELIC HEAVEN

Miranda Lee Richards, an alumna of the Brian Jonestown Massacre, has a winning cross-generational appeal on her solo debut, *The Herethereafter* (Virgin). Baby boomers who haven't given up on the sixties will be thrilled with her gentle but authoritative command of melodic psychedelia. (If you thought the Beatles had it right with "Strawberry Fields" and the Stones had it right with "Dandelion," wonderfully updated here, you'll want to smoke a bongful of dried banana peels and stare at the sun.) Non-baby boomers will simply groove on the arrangements and marvel at her songwriting. She never lets the weirdness get in the way of the melodies, which is a miracle of taste in this Digital Age of Unlimited Noises. Lyrically, Richards manages to

be personal without descending into the narcissism and excruciating relationship analysis that has flawed the work of many of her peers. Again, it's the sixties influence, the hippie vibe of freedom over societal constrictions. She's also been influenced by that master of nineteenth-century French psychedelia, Charles Baudelaire, whose poem "The Landscape" she adapts for a song. Baudelaire and Richards both are concerned with the transitory nature of beauty and life ("Seasons will pass 'til Autumn fades the rose"), and both believe in compensating with "the sinless Idyll of innocent words." Not a bad description of the *Herethereafter*. —C.M.Y.

THE EARLY HOLIDAY

In a contemporary marketplace where aspiring jazz singers are notable primarily for an audible lack of maturity, the poise, daring, and raw emotion of the young Billie Holiday are more startling than ever. Holiday was barely twenty years old in 1935 when she began recording a series of sessions under the leadership of the pianist Teddy Wilson which redefined the possibilities of vocal jazz and turned numerous sow's ears of swing-era song pluggers into musical silk. Holiday's gifts included a plasticity of phrasing on a par with the era's most talented instrumentalists, and an interpretive complexity that infused even the most banal lyrics with layers of meaning. She practiced her art in the company of virtually every star of the big-band era, operating (until fame and dramatic material such as "Strange Fruit" made her the undeniable center of attention) as one

among many gifted soloists. Holiday's early recordings, available in numerous forms in the past, have never been as comprehensively presented as on *Lady Day: The Complete Billie Holiday on Columbia, 1933-1944* (Columbia/Legacy). The 230 tracks in this 10-disc set contain definitive readings of standards and obscurities alike, as Holiday and a revolving cast of associates (including Wilson, Benny Goodman, Bunny Berigan, and her musical soulmate, the tenor saxophonist Lester Young) raise the likes of "My First Impression of You," and "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" to the same Olympian heights as their readings of "Summertime" and "These Foolish Things." Alternate takes and air checks are programmed at the end of the package and include rare glimpses of Holiday supported by the bands of Goodman, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington. —B.B.

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This month, the A&E Network's *Biography* series offers a closer look at the opera singer Maria Callas. In *Maria Callas: A Big Destiny*. During her twelve-year career Callas came to represent the very definition of a diva: glamorous, volatile, passionately devoted to her art. *Biography* explores her life with a moving collection of pictures from her personal and professional lives. Chrysler is pleased to sponsor *Biography* and this edition of the Arts & Entertainment Preview.



INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

OUT OF THE ORDINARY

"Mundane studies" comes of age

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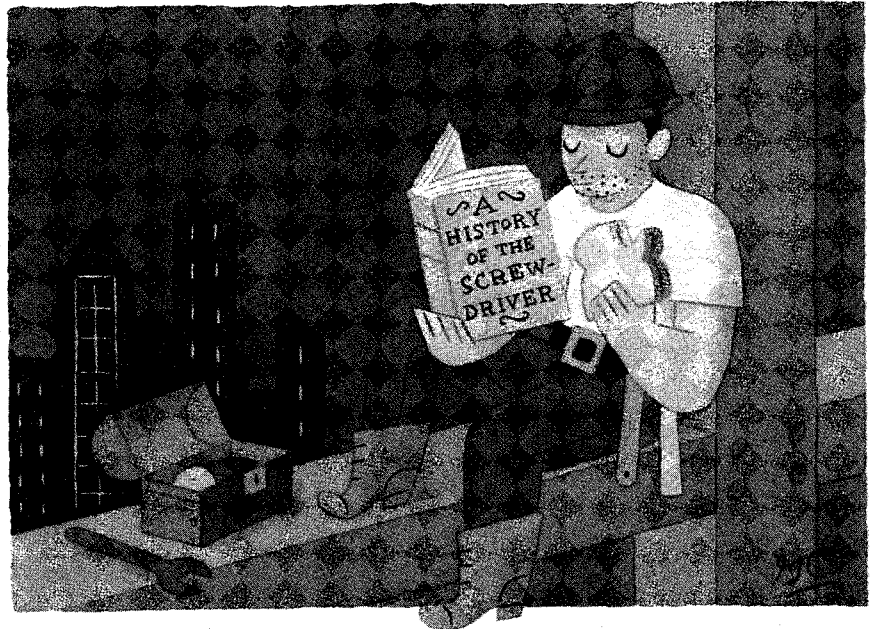
Not long ago a friend called my attention to an article by the British historian Colin Jones titled "Pulling Teeth in Eighteenth-Century Paris." I was glad she did. It would be wrong to say that I am captivated by teeth, but they do leave a lasting impression. I recall seeing as a child, in a display case at a museum, a hollow false tooth used by a spy to carry secret messages during the Revolutionary War (not successfully, it would seem). The Centers for Disease Control a few years back released a state-by-state study of tooth loss, the central finding of which I retain: in West Virginia, the most severely afflicted state, almost 50 percent of those over the age of sixty-five have no teeth at all. I can still summon the image, from a book of photographs, of a collection of teeth extracted by Czar Peter the Great, "who fancied himself a dentist," each from a different person, and each carefully labeled. I remember looking twice at an obituary headline that identified its subject as a "DENTIST AND HUMANITARIAN."

The ostensible subject of Colin Jones's article is a man known as le Grand Thomas, a freelance tooth puller of formidable girth who plied his trade from a cart on the Pont-Neuf for half a century, until the 1750s. He styled himself the "pearl of charlatans" and the "massive Aesculapius" and displayed a banner bearing the legend DENTEM SINON MAXILLAM ("The tooth, and if not, the jaw"). Tooth-pulling at the time was, like executions, a form of public entertainment. Jones situates Thomas at the beginning of a process that would lead not only to the emergence of modern dentistry but also, as a consequence, to much of the oral iconography of modern advertising.

"The mouth," Jones writes, "was becoming the imaginary site around which revolved both a nascent academic industry and a new and broader commercialism." Toothbrushes, toothpowder, and false teeth came into vogue in the eighteenth century among an expanding bourgeoisie. As teeth improved, a new phenomenon took hold in the realm of art. Ever since antiquity the convention had been to depict respectable people

a single name, but its manifestations could be lumped together under the rubric "mundane studies."

Consider two paths to enlightenment. One is to take subject matter that is vast and grand (the Middle Ages, say) and slice it into thin sections for analysis ("Glazed Pottery and Social Class in Ninth-Century Thuringia"). The other path leads from the particular to the general—it takes something



with their mouths closed and their teeth hidden; the open-mouthed, gap-toothed look was reserved for the depraved, the demented, and the vulgar. Now, in the 1780s, for the first time, the smile was flashed in formal portraiture, celebrating full sets of even white teeth.

Colin Jones's progression from the Pont-Neuf to the Pepsodent smile exemplifies a rapidly expanding genre. Its practitioners are drawn from many fields, and their interests range from the most pedestrian aspects of popular culture to the most rarefied precincts of serious history. The genre doesn't have

seemingly unremarkable (a kind of food, an article of dress, a body part) and from it derives a larger world of meaning. In the mid-1970s the historian and John Adams biographer Page Smith and the biologist Charles Daniel published *The Chicken Book*, a conceptual vivisection of *Gallus domesticus*, and a tour de force. A decade and a half later the engineer Henry Petroski devoted an entire volume to the pencil. Last year the architect Witold Rybczynski produced *One Good Turn*, a history of the screw-driver and the screw. This approach—the mundane-studies approach—continues to gather momentum. The impetus

GREG CLARKE

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comes partly from the rise of social history, with its focus on ordinary life. The challenge of extracting significance from some unlikely object provides the further incentive of a postmodernist daredevil thrill.

No subject is too small. A few years ago I received a letter from a man named Jay W. Stein, who, as a government archivist working with original Nazi and Soviet documents, had managed to assemble a museum-quality collection of the binders, fasteners, clamps, and clips that held the bureaucracies' papers together. Now a librarian, Stein had continued to pursue his passion, and he enclosed an article of his from the *Law Library Journal*—"Something Little and Shiny on the Judicial Stage: The Paper Clip." "What I discovered," Stein wrote in the article, "was that the paper clip is more taken for granted than almost anything in the judicial process"—despite the fact that case after case has hinged on this simple device. Paper clips have figured in deciding whether pages were part of wills. The fact that a document's edge was marked by paper clips has been accepted as evidence that the document was in fact read. Paper clips sometimes turn up as weapons. Stein observed,

Like the horseshoe nail that crippled the horse and thwarted its rider in battle, the paper clip is small compared to most things involved in litigation. Yet, how often it is mentioned suggests pausing to remind oneself how much the little things count.

The common potato seems like a little thing—ordinariness in tuber form. But I began to see potatoes differently after reading a recent essay, "The Potato in the Materialist Imagination," by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt. As the potato became a European staple, 200 years ago, it also became the focus of a fierce intellectual debate. The pro-potato forces celebrated the potato's astonishing utility: it grew with little effort, and fed people and swine alike. The anti-potato forces found this repugnant—and they worried about an insidious social consequence. Bread, the traditional staple, caught people up in a complex web of interactions—growing, harvesting, threshing, milling, baking, selling.

The potato required none of that. A vast rural proletariat in a state of utter isolation could feed on roots from the ground, breed, and degrade into dust.

Dust itself is the subject of a magisterial book by the historian Joseph Amato. *Dust* surveys many topics—medieval philosophy, Victorian technology, the cleanliness movement—but the central narrative concerns how dust came to lose its special status in the poetic and the scientific imagination. Only a few centuries ago, Amato writes, dust was regarded as "the finest thing the human eye could see ... a barrier between the visible and the invisible." Those motes dancing in shafts of sunlight represented an elemental condition to which all things would return. Then along came the microscope, revealing an "infinity of the infinitesimal." Dust was consigned to the dustbin (or the allergist).

I learned about *Dust* by way of an excerpt in the *Journal of Mundane Behavior* (www.mundanebehavior.org), a new peer-reviewed publication devoted to "research, theory and method regarding the very obvious features of our existence." The first few issues offered articles about the morning shave, elevator conversation, shopping at Wal-Mart, on-field prayer by athletes, and the use of the television remote control. One essay, "When Nothing Happened," made the point that days of yore consisted mostly of circumstances that rarely get attention—stability, boredom, daydreaming, business as usual. A personal Web-cam version of ancient Babylon might look very familiar.

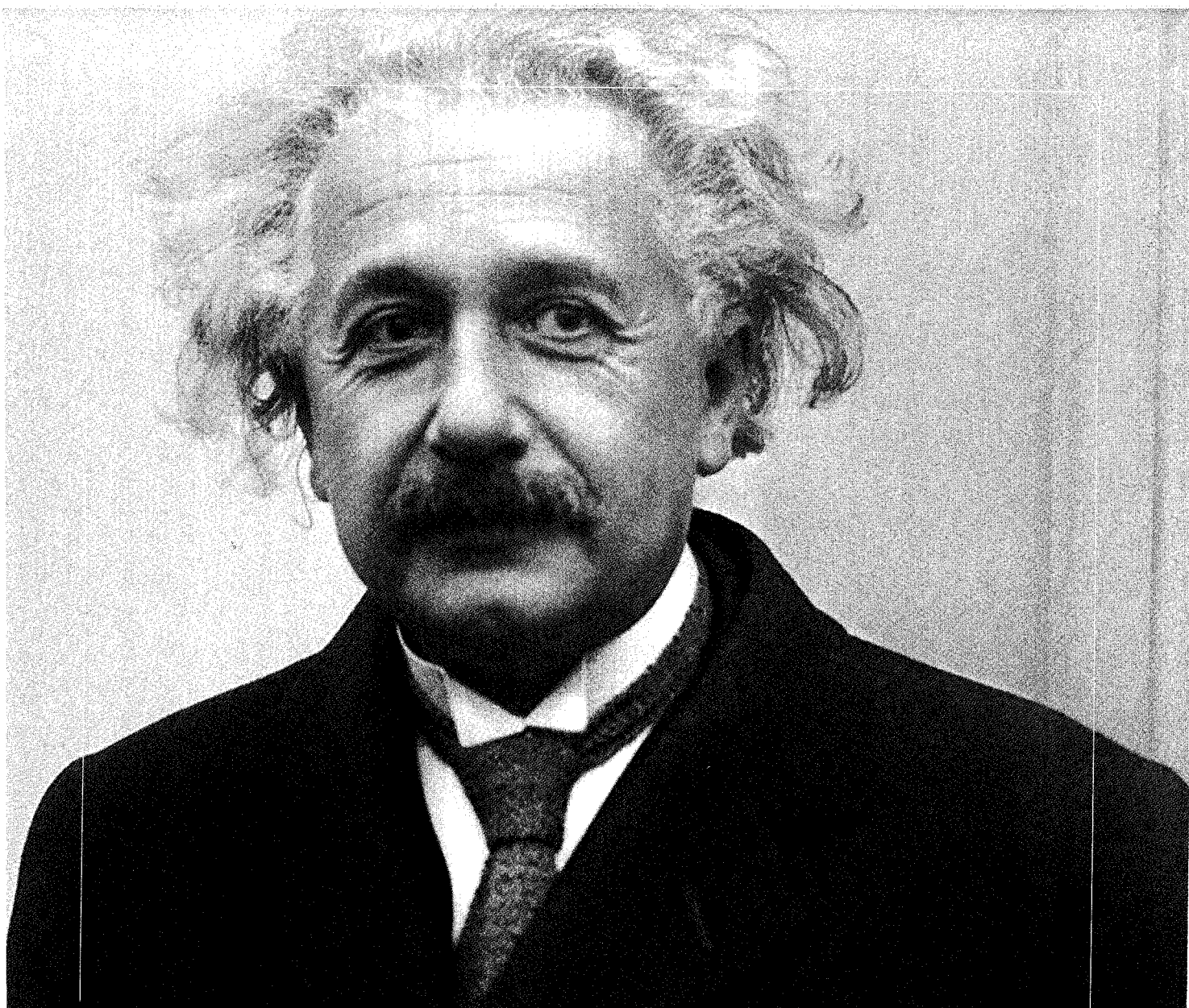
The journal is off to a promising start, but the task ahead is enormous. If I could give out Guggenheims for mundane studies, I'd channel young scholars toward certain potentially fruitful topics. For instance, a detailed study of the interstitial conversation in wiretap transcripts is long overdue. These documents have obvious short-term utility for what they reveal about criminal mayhem, but the long-term value lies in everything else. Here's Vincent Romano talking to John "Sideburns" Cerrella about his health: "Yeah, all right, the leg feels much better, much better, much, much better. I took a couple of glasses of toma-

to juice, you know, for potassium." Here's a disquisition on yogurt from Frank "Frankie California" Condo: "Brown Cow with the thick crust on top and you mix the crust, that's the, the bacteria. You mix that all in there ... Brown Cow. That's what all the health fiends eat. Brown Cow." Eating habits, folk remedies, amorous insights, movie reviews—this is a mundane-studies mother lode.

The inane use of quotation marks on menus, advertisements, and public signage—STEAKS AND BURGERS "FROM THE GRILL"; WHEN LEAVING THE BATHROOM "PLEASE TURN OFF THE LIGHT"—would be another prime focus of investigation. The development may not seem like an urgent public issue, but we would do well to assess its subtly corrosive effects. Even the cocktail napkins on *Air Force One* now bear a legend in quotation marks: "Aboard the Presidential Aircraft." What is the semiotic essence of this form of display? If nothing is being quoted, then what is "quotation" coming to mean?

Finally, there is the matter of the disappearing object. This linguistic tropism takes form in sentences like "The Yankees amaze" and "The movie fails to excite"—sentences in which a transitive verb, which takes a direct object, has been casually stripped of one. *The Wall Street Journal* recently published the following headline: "STOCK NIGHTMARES? HISTORY MAY COMFORT." Does the potential activity embodied in verbs like "amaze," "excite," and "comfort" exist as an independent force, swirling atmospherically, regardless of whether actual people or things are affected? Is the detachment of verb and object one more step toward a depersonalized world?

Sherlock Holmes boasted that he could infer Niagara Falls from a drop of water. William Blake wrote of seeing the world in a grain of sand, and heaven in a wild flower. Colin Jones chose teeth. Other pioneers of mundane studies have chosen the tulip, the cod, the color mauve, longitude, phosphorus, the F word, the handshake, and the contents of garbage cans. The world is a mundane place if it is anything at all, and the possibilities ahead cannot fail to excite. ■



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NOTES & DISPATCHES

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT STORM

The race for ever more sensational "torn porn" is on

.....

The hazards faced by those attempting to shoot close-up video footage of tornadoes cannot be overstated. Tornadoes can form suddenly and with little warning, and photographers who turn down the wrong road at the wrong time can find themselves discomfited by 200-mph winds containing jagged bits of automobiles, sheets of razor-sharp aluminum siding, and lancelike sections of splintered fence posts.

Yet as anyone who watches television knows, the potential consequences have not stanchd the flow of tornado videos. Nothing, apparently, boosts ratings like nature out of control, and in recent years blurry scenes of tornadoes hoovering up subdivisions, livestock-filled barns, and blue-sparking electric substations—examples of a genre sometimes referred to as “torn porn”—have become a staple on broadcast and cable networks.

Supplying the tornado-video industry is a coterie of camera-toting semi-professional storm chasers who converge on the Great Plains each spring, during the height of tornado season. Many drive cars elaborately accessorized with multiple antennae and inscrutable meteorological devices; when they meet up at a parking lot, the gathering can resemble a fleet of landlocked fishing trawlers. Although some pursue storms for the sheer fun of it, a good many hope to cover the cost of their obsession, and perhaps even to turn a small profit, by selling footage to television documentarians, local news outlets, or The Weather Channel. Chasers say that they typically earn \$20 to \$50 for each second of video aired, although

this can go as high as \$200 a second, depending on quality, quantity, and exclusivity.

One might assume that the ongoing film festival of tornado carnage would translate into heady times for freelance storm videographers. Surprisingly, that's not the case. Storm chasers who just a few years ago could count on pocketing a few hundred dollars or more for a well-composed, in-focus video of a twister are today uniformly gloomy about their prospects.

For one thing, supply now outstrips demand. What the televised videos *don't* show is that the person shooting the scene is often just one of a dozen or more photographers parked haphazardly along the side of the same road, all shouting “Tornado on the ground!” and all getting basically the same shot.

What's more, the sorts of roadside videos historically obtained by the semi-pros have fallen out of favor. “In the early 1990s producers wanted steady tripod shots, smooth pans, artistic footage,” says Greg Stumpf, a meteorologist and an experienced storm chaser and photographer. “Today they want the thrilling, shocking, *Cops*-like video—handheld and all jerky, with the focus going in and out, and a lot of screaming.” This kind of footage is as often as not obtained by camcorder-owning amateurs—storm chase-ees rather than chasers—who impulsively grab their cameras as a tornado approaches and, through either bravado or stupidity, shoot well past the time they should have taken cover. (Aficionados often identify these clips by the incidental comments made during the filming. Among the better-known amateur videos are “Get Away From the Window!” and “God, I Hate Oklahoma.”) The amateurs tend to be honored to have their tapes run on TV and often provide them to producers at no charge.

The upshot of all of this is an effort

among some veteran storm videographers to get hard-core footage that amateur photographers could not possibly stumble on. Footage, say, from *inside* a tornado's vortex. Of course, no matter how motivated a storm chaser may be to obtain such a shot, certain tactical and safety problems present themselves. But what if one could deploy an impregnable video system—in essence, a small, heavily fortified bunker containing a running video camera—directly under a tornado?

Norman, Oklahoma, is the home of the National Severe Storms Laboratory and a favored layover spot for storm chasers waiting out lulls in bad weather. I visited the town last May, because I had received reports that several storm chasers had in fact developed military-strength tornado cameras, and that a sort of small-scale space race to obtain usable footage with them was under way. The reports weren't hard to confirm. Wandering around the parking lot of my motel one sunny morning, I came upon four storm chasers who had been crisscrossing the Plains with their tornado cams in tow.

Much of the inspiration for these would-be pioneers has come from the tantalizing near success of one of the people I spoke with there—Charles Edwards, an enterprising Oklahoman who built and deployed the first tornado cam. (Edwards is also a ground-breaker in storm tourism, and has been leading vans of waiver-signing tourists in search of severe weather since 1996.) Edwards constructed a camera housing out of fiberglass and lead; it was about the size and shape of the portable gas tanks commonly used in boats with outboard motors, and was painted the same bright orange, a color chosen to make the device easier to find after a storm.

In May of 1997 Edwards placed his

camera in what he hoped would be the path of an oncoming tornado outside Wichita, Kansas. He had planned well: the tornado scored a direct hit. When he recovered the device, the following day, the paint had been sandblasted clean off one side of the housing, and the camera had been so badly mangled that it took him three days to extract the videotape.

The footage is spectacular—up to a point. A menacing if somewhat murky wedge-shaped tornado vectors toward the camera, but at a critical juncture—when the funnel is all but upon the camera—the storm’s fierce winds slop a thick coat of mud across the lens, fully obscuring the tornado from view. (Edwards nevertheless sold the footage to a producer for \$8,000 and licensed the audio to a museum for use in a facsimile storm shelter.)

tornado-chasing highlights, which he sells by mail order for \$50. But because storm videos are aired so liberally on television these days, the direct-to-consumer tornado-video market—a once lucrative niche—has pretty well tanked. Leonard told me that so far he has sold “about four copies.”

When the subject of tornado cams came up, Leonard disappeared briefly into the back of a minivan, emerging with his version. In truth, the device is not all that impressive—it’s really just a camera inside a waterproof housing of the sort used for underwater video photography. (It’s particularly handy for filming hurricanes, Leonard pointed out.) His plan is correspondingly simple: “Just lay it out in front of a tornado” and hope somehow to find it later. This may be an overly optimistic

a trip wire, which is to be staked in the ground. “If the device decides to take off or whatever, it will make a really piercing noise for an hour or so,” Lewison said. “Hopefully, that will make it a little easier to find.”

Lewison tapped on the window of the housing, to draw my attention to its strength. “Supposedly, it will stop a twenty-two,” he said. It hadn’t yet been tornado-tested, but earlier in the year Lewison had used a homemade potato gun to fire a spud at 160 mph directly at the Lexan-shielded lens. “It didn’t do any damage,” he reported. “And we got some pretty interesting video.”

The housing constructed by Mike Theiss, a storm chaser based in Key Largo, is lower and more aerodynamic than Lewison’s. It consists mostly of heavy-gauge aluminum; a twenty-pound weight in the bottom compartment brings it to about sixty-five pounds. Theiss is currently soliciting corporate sponsors and hopes soon to add a \$5,000 state-of-the-art GPS locator, of the sort used to track stolen automobiles. If this pans out, he’ll remove the weight so that the camera can fly off and perhaps be wholly ingested by a tornado, which he believes would enhance the value of the footage even further.

The community of storm chasers is, of necessity, highly nomadic, and it’s impossible to know just how many other people with similar aspirations might have been congregating last spring in other parking lots throughout the Plains. But it’s a reasonably safe bet that if any of them gets what Theiss calls “the money shot,” it will be hard to watch television and not know about it. It’s also a safe bet that once such footage is aired, the ante will rise again.

Sitting at a Texas Panhandle bar a few days later, I was told by the lavishly bearded man next to me that a black SUV had recently passed through town, customized with interior roll bars and thick steel screens on all windows but the windshield. The driver’s plan, he said, was to motor right up to the vortex of a tornado, with cameras running.

Such risk-taking would be very foolish, we agreed. We agreed on another thing as well: it would certainly make for must-see TV. —WAYNE CURTIS



The following year Edwards built a new camera housing with several refinements, which he described to me when not lamenting the day’s disappointingly pleasant weather. These included a recessed lens, a mud trap, and a grenade-pin-style power switch; he added the switch after debris from a tornado turned the camera off. Edwards has deployed the new device four times, but each attempt was thwarted by a technical glitch or a dissipating storm.

Also in the parking lot was Jim Leonard, of the Florida Keys, who assists Edwards on his storm tours and is one of the original auteurs of storm video. Leonard has been chasing tornadoes, hurricanes, and typhoons for twenty-eight years. He recently produced a six-hour, three-video compilation of

strategy, given that items sucked up by tornadoes are often located great distances from where they started. (The longtime record is held by a canceled check that traveled 225 miles, from Stockton, Kansas, to Winnetoon, Nebraska, in 1915.)

The other two storm chasers I met in the parking lot had given more thought to recovery plans. Dave Lewison, a mechanical engineer from upstate New York, worked with a friend last spring to weld together a sturdy tent-shaped steel structure containing a Lexan window three eighths of an inch thick—a contraption that looks like a Habitrail accessory for protecting gerbils in the event of nuclear war. The housing, which weighs about fifty pounds, contains an alarm attached to

THANKS FOR NOTHING

A former chief economist at the World Bank offers a case study in how heavy-handed interference can break what doesn't need fixing

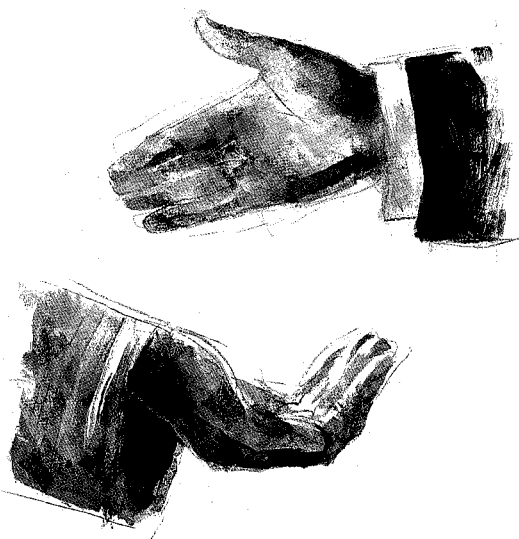
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During the recent demonstrations in Seattle, Quebec City, and elsewhere denouncing the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the press tended to dismiss the protesters as fringe reactionaries ignorant of the benefits of globalization. But although no one condones the violence in Genoa, for example, it would be wrong simply to reject many of the protesters' concerns. As the chief economist at the World Bank from 1997 to 2000, I have seen firsthand the dark side of globalization—how the liberalization of capital markets, by allowing speculative money to pour in and out of a country at a moment's whim, devastated East Asia; how so-called structural-adjustment loans to some of the poorest countries in the world "restructured" those countries' economies so as to eliminate jobs but did not provide the means of creating new ones, leading to widespread unemployment and cuts in basic services. The media and the public have since become concerned about this dark side as well—globalization without a human face, it is sometimes called.

However, the issue that is commonly debated—namely, whether we should be "for" or "against" globalization—is not the salient one. As a practical matter there is no retreating from globalization. The real issue is the conduct of the international economic organizations that steer it. If we continue with globalization as it has been managed in the past, its agenda driven by the North for the North, reflecting the North's ideologies and values, the future will not be bright. There will be a backlash in the developing world and increasing conflict with the developed world. There will be greater global instability and rising doubts about the value of a market economy. Those doubts are already reflected in a pervasive hostility toward the IMF in the Third World: in Thailand and Korea, for example,

ordinary citizens refer to their countries' debilitating recessions as "the IMF." Yet well-managed globalization has enormous potential for improving the lives of people in poor countries.

Events in Ethiopia offer a case study of the ways in which globalization can go awry, and they highlight the need for reform. In March of 1997, barely a month into my job at the World Bank, I went to Ethiopia to meet with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Meles came to power in 1991, after a seventeen-year guerrilla war against a bloody Marxist regime. His victory left him facing seemingly intractable problems. Ethiopia, at the time a nation of 58 million people, had a per capita income of around \$100 a year. Droughts had killed millions. Though he trained in medicine, Meles



had studied economics at the Open University, in England, and knew that only major changes in economic policy could bring his country out of poverty. During our discussions he showed a deeper and more subtle understanding of economic principles (not to mention a greater knowledge of the circumstances in his country) than many if not most of the international economic bureaucrats I would deal with in the succeeding three years.

These intellectual attributes were matched by integrity: Meles was quick to investigate any accusations of corruption in his government. He was committed to decentralization—to ensuring that the center did not lose touch with the various regions.

At the time of my arrival Meles was engaged in a bitter dispute with the International Monetary Fund, which had suspended its program in his country. At stake was not just some \$125 million of IMF money but potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in World Bank loans as well. Traditionally the World Bank is reluctant to lend money unless the IMF certifies that the country in question has a solid macro-economic framework. The provision is well intentioned: history has shown that governments that cannot manage their overall economy do not do a good job managing foreign aid.

The IMF is supposed to judge performance by results. Ethiopia's results could not have been better. It had no inflation; in fact, prices were falling.

Output was growing steadily. Meles was demonstrating that with the right policies even a poor country recovering from civil war and famine can experience sustained economic growth. After years of struggle and rebuilding, Ethiopia was beginning once again to receive assistance from Western governments.

Judging by results, then, the IMF should have given Ethiopia an A+. And there were other positive indicators, such as direct evidence of the competence and commitment of the government. For instance, it had cut back dramatically on military spending—a remarkable feat for a government that had come to power by military means—in favor of spending to fight poverty. This was precisely the kind of government to which the international community should have been directing assistance. Yet the IMF had suspended its aid. Why?

The Fund was worried, first, about the role of foreign aid in the government's budget. A poor country like Ethiopia has two sources of revenue—taxes and foreign assistance. The government's budget is balanced as long as those revenues equal expenditures. This may seem like elementary economics—but it is not IMF economics.

Although Ethiopia's budget was balanced, the Fund argued that the country's budgetary position was untenable: what would happen if foreign assistance suddenly dried up? Ethiopia should act immediately, the Fund argued, to prevent the possibility of disaster. That meant cutting spending or raising taxes—a difficult action in any country, but especially in a desperately poor one.

An argument against long-term reliance on foreign aid may be superficially appealing, but in reality it dictated that Ethiopia's expenditures could be paid for only by tax revenues. That is a fundamentally unsound policy: it means that foreign aid does not lead to more schools or health clinics. Instead the money is, in effect, simply added to reserves. Surely this was not the intention of the international donor community. Surely donors wanted to see those new schools and health clinics built in Ethiopia. Meles put the matter to me passionately: he said that he had not fought so hard for seventeen years to be told by some bureaucrat that he could not actually provide improved services for his people once he had persuaded donors to pay for them.

I cannot adequately describe the emotional force of his words or the impact they had on me. I had taken the World Bank job with one mission in mind—to work to reduce poverty in the poorest countries of the world. I had known that the economics would be difficult, but I had not fathomed the depth of the bureaucratic and political problems imposed by the IMF.

Meles provided an economically sound response to the IMF's concerns about the stability of foreign aid: flexible spending. Building schools and clinics does not require long-term commitments. If donors provided money to build schools, Ethiopia would build schools; if they stopped providing funds (as they had for a while), Ethiopia would stop building schools. But the IMF would not be swayed.

The IMF had other bones to pick with Meles. In 1996 Ethiopia repaid a U.S. bank loan early, using some of its reserves. The transaction made perfect sense. In spite of the solid

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A black and white photograph of a woman with short, dark, wavy hair, wearing a dark top and a necklace. She is looking slightly to her right with a serious expression, and her hands are raised in a gesturing motion. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a doorway or a window with vertical bars or a screen.

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nature of its collateral (an airplane), Ethiopia was paying a far higher interest rate on its loan than it was receiving on reserves. But the United States and the IMF objected. They were bothered not by the logic of the strategy but by the fact that Ethiopia had undertaken this course without consulting the IMF. The IMF used this failure to consult as one of the grounds for suspending its program. But why should a sovereign country—one whose policies had convincingly demonstrated its capability—have to ask permission of the IMF for every action it undertakes?

Another point of contention related to financial markets. Even after the United States experienced the ruinous consequences of financial deregulation, in the form of the savings-and-loan debacle, the IMF preached the gospel of rapid deregulation around the world, to countries far less able to withstand its negative consequences. Earlier deregulation in Kenya had led to soaring interest rates there. Meles sensibly resisted such a move in Ethiopia. But the IMF continued to insist on deregulation, and not even a panel of scholars I assembled, most of whom supported Meles's position, could budge the organization.

These episodes highlight two troubling aspects of the IMF's characteristic behavior. The first concerns secrecy. Because so many of its decisions are reached behind closed doors, the IMF leaves itself open to suspicions that power politics, special interests, or other agendas unrelated to its stated purposes are at play. For example, some critics questioned whether it was just a coincidence that Ethiopia's early repayment deprived a U.S. bank of a high-interest, secure-collateral loan on which it was making large profits and that the United States was the country most vociferously protesting. A second, closely linked aspect concerns the subordination of matters of substance to matters of process. The processes themselves, with the numerous conditions that are often attached, not only infringe on national sovereignty but also tend to undermine democracy.

I returned to Washington from Ethiopia gravely upset by what I had

seen. During the following weeks I convinced the World Bank that the IMF's position made no sense, and the Bank tripled its lending to Ethiopia. In the ensuing years the country has been beset by political problems and war. It is impossible to know whether some of its travails could have been avoided or mitigated if aid had been more forthcoming.

The debate over globalization has already had an impact: the IMF's rhetoric, and in some instances its actions, have changed. The IMF talks more about poverty and participation than it used to. Last year it finally offered a number of poor countries meaningful debt relief. Still, these are only beginnings.

The biggest problems afflicting the IMF and other instruments of global-

ization concern governance. At the United Nations five countries can exercise veto power. In the IMF only one—the United States—can do so. At both the IMF and the World Bank voting rights are allocated not according to population but according to economic power, and the various countries' representatives are typically finance ministers or members of central banks, not officials with broader outlooks and concerns. Most of the debate about reforming the international economic architecture has occurred within these same small, elite circles. The voices of those most affected by globalization are barely audible in discussions about how the table should be reshaped and who should have a seat at it. —JOSEPH STIGLITZ

STRASBOURG

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The European Parliament has no fixed seat and spends a small fortune each month trekking from Belgium and Luxembourg to France

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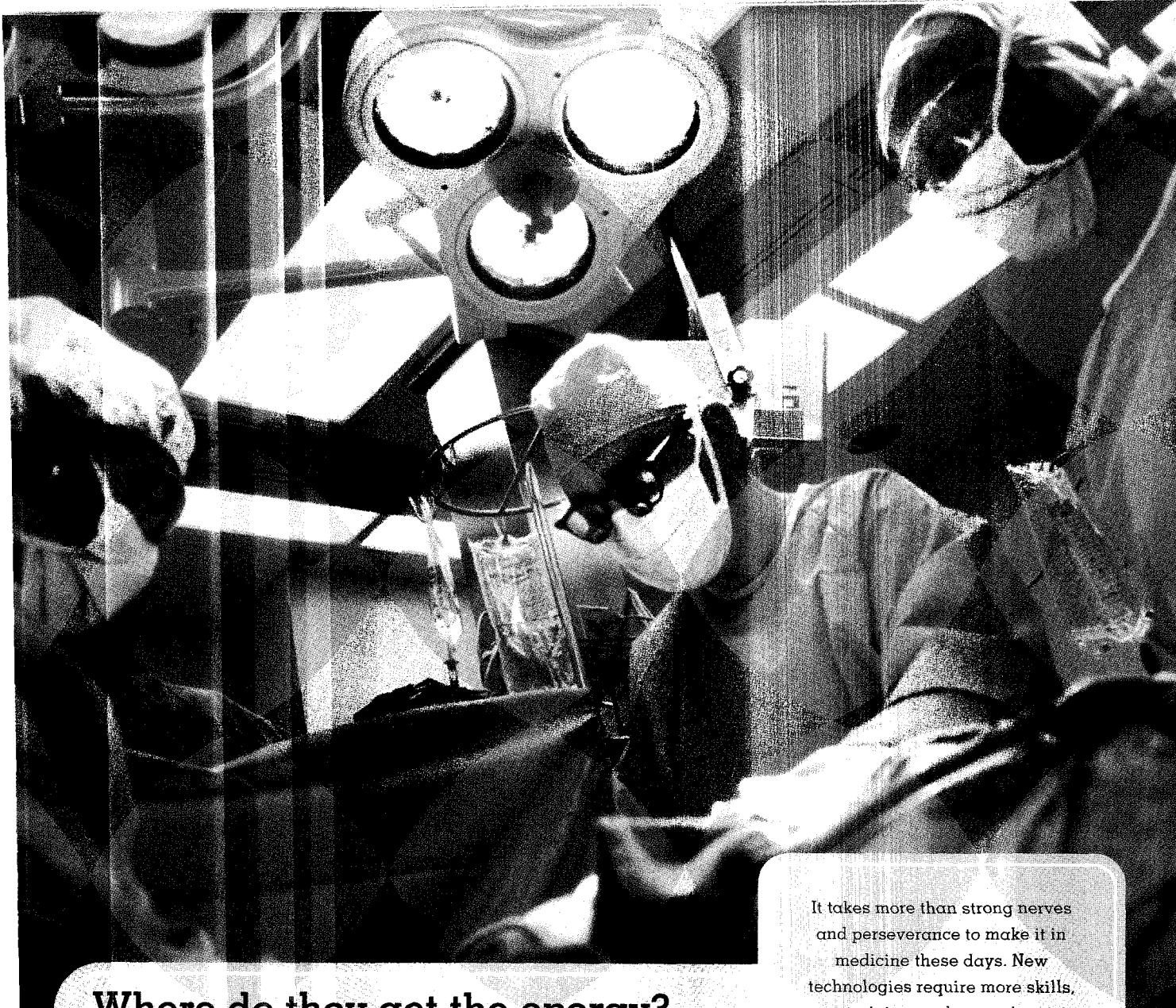
The curved glass façade of the European Parliament soars like the prow of an ocean liner on the outskirts of Strasbourg. The Parisian architects of the building, which opened two years ago, say that its sleek design was meant to embody "democracy in motion." Their description is apter than they perhaps intended: the transnational legislature leads a curiously peripatetic existence, causing many Europeans to view it essentially as a traveling circus.

When I arrived in Strasbourg on a recent Monday morning, to observe a four-day session opening that afternoon, the hallways and the futuristic, cavernous debating chamber were deserted. But by midday hundreds of smartly dressed, suitcase-toting parliamentarians and their aides were scurrying across the elliptical forecourt toward their offices. Outside each office door stood at least one large metal trunk that had been packed the week before.

The smooth operation of the parliament, a body directly elected by the citizens of the European Union's fifteen member nations, is bound up as much

with luggage and loading docks as with lawmaking and lectures: one of the oddest aspects of European unification is that the European Parliament operates out of three different cities. The 626 deputies, along with retinues of clerks, interpreters, and secretaries, regularly shuttle back and forth between Strasbourg and Brussels, where they occupy an equally mammoth debating chamber and a 2,600-room office complex. Making matters even more cumbersome, the EP's secretariat and translation service are in Luxembourg. The constant to-and-fro and upkeep of separate headquarters in this tale of three cities costs more than \$150 million a year—nearly a fifth of the parliament's budget.

For those trapped in it, the EP's vagabond existence recalls nothing so much as the title of a 1969 movie comedy about Americans on a whirlwind European tour: *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium*. "You're living out of a suitcase half the time," David Bowie, a British MEP (member of the European Parliament), says. "I need to check every morning what desk I'm at and in which country."



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The routine goes like this: One Friday night each month a dozen freight trucks haul the parliament's trappings southeast from Brussels and Luxembourg, across the former Maginot Line. To make the trek to Strasbourg, some 280 miles from Brussels, MEPs are each supplied with one or more trunks bearing a color-coded delivery label emblazoned with the EU's emblem, a circle of stars. The trunks are filled with whatever documents, legal manuals, and reference works might be required in France. By Friday afternoon the gray or blue lockers, battered by use, line the corridors. At 6:00 P.M. workers begin strapping them on dollies and moving them into vehicles waiting in the subterranean garage.

A total of 5,000 trunks, wheeled filing cabinets, and boxes of audiovisual equipment make the trip from Brussels and Luxembourg each month, along with the electronic cards with which the MEPs cast their votes. Twenty-five ushers pack up the starched white bow ties and black tail coats they wear to assist in the debating chambers; chauffeurs drive a fleet of twelve official cars, three minivans, and two buses to Strasbourg in order to ferry the parliamentarians around town. Each day during the sojourn in France courier vans jammed with still more trunks deliver the MEPs' mail from Brussels and Luxembourg.

After the Strasbourg session ends, on Thursday, the process is reversed. "I compare it to the Formula One motor-racing championships, where they have trailers that have to keep moving and changing places," Adolfo Orcajo, a Spaniard who heads the EP's in-house moving department, told me. "Everything has to be there on time for the start of the race, and then they pack up and go on to the next one. A political decision could stop all this, but for the moment we have to comply."

"It's not an ideal situation, but we manage," says the parliament's president, Nicole Fontaine, of France, referring to what she terms the "transhumance"—a Latin word for the seasonal migration of livestock. "We did not create this situation, and we would not have created it if we had been given the choice."

In 1952 Strasbourg was designated the meeting place of the EP's forerunner, a toothless consultative body known as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (the ECSC gave rise in 1958 to the Brussels-based European Economic Community, which evolved into the European Community and in 1993 became the European Union). Situated on the Rhine River, which divides France from Germany, and a trophy of numerous Franco-German wars, Strasbourg was seen as symbolically appropriate for institutions devoted to European reconciliation. Until 1999 the various incarnations of what became



the European Parliament held most of their plenary sessions in Strasbourg, in the headquarters of the Council of Europe, a separate intergovernmental organization set up in 1949 to engender harmony on the war-torn Continent. But by the 1960s parliamentary committees had begun to meet in Brussels.

As the organization now known as the European Union came into being and began to increase in size, parts of Brussels were razed to make way for its administration, and the parliament began holding supplemental plenary sessions there (six plenary sessions are now held in Brussels each year). At a 1992 summit of European leaders France's President, François Mitterrand, determined that Strasbourg not

be supplanted by Brussels, extracted a treaty pledge that at least twelve plenary sessions a year would be held in the French city. France then got the parliament to commit to erecting a new building in Strasbourg—a monumental \$400 million structure, which even the normally reserved *Le Monde* pronounced "*pharaonique*"—by threatening to block a reapportionment of seats that was needed to accommodate German reunification.

The parliament's ceaseless peregrinations have provided fodder for skeptics, who deride the institution as just another black hole for EU funds. "People don't know a lot about what the parliament does, aside from oscillate between Brussels and Strasbourg," Roy Perry, a British MEP, acknowledges. Average voter participation in EP elections dropped from more than 60 percent in 1979 to less than 50 percent in 1999.

Still, the parliament has recently begun flexing its muscles in unprecedented ways, insisting on accountability within the EU bureaucracy. Astonishing those who long dismissed it as impotent, the EP in 1999 forced the resignation of all twenty members of the European Commission (the EU's executive body) amid charges of widespread corruption.

Although the parliament can't initiate legislation, it has been granted increased powers under successive EU treaties: it can now approve, amend, or veto 80 percent of the economic and social regulations generated by the European Commission (taxation and agricultural policy remain outside its control). German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has recently proposed strengthening the EP's hand in budgetary matters. Corporations and citizens' groups have been quick to recognize the parliament's increased leverage, especially in environmental and consumer protection, and are dispatching more and more lobbyists to it. During the past year the U.S. mission to the EU has beefed up its monitoring of the EP's activity. "There are many ways in which this parliament affects us," a U.S. envoy who follows economic relations told me. Recent legislation, including laws to restrict genetically modified

In 1972 Roy Allison, who had just stepped down as Vice President and Chief Acoustic Engineer of A.R. (Acoustic Research) after having created the most lauded loudspeakers of his generation, began extensive research into room surfaces to determine how changes in loudspeaker design could produce the greatest fidelity, clarity and imagery possible. Not content with speakers that tested right in an anechoic chamber, Mr. Allison wanted to build speakers that would reproduce recordings in the kind of rooms people live in. Mr. Allison studied the effects of corners, ceiling height, room dimensions, windows, furniture and even people, on the sound produced by various loudspeaker designs.

Two years later, predicated on that research, Allison Acoustics®

was born. For the next fifteen years, Roy Allison's company produced what critics called the best loudspeakers in the world. Today, many of those loudspeakers are still in service to owners who say they would never part with them. A loyal, incredibly devoted following has surrounded the work of Roy Allison and his legendary speakers such as the Allison One, Allison Two, Allison Three, Allison Four and Allison CD-9.

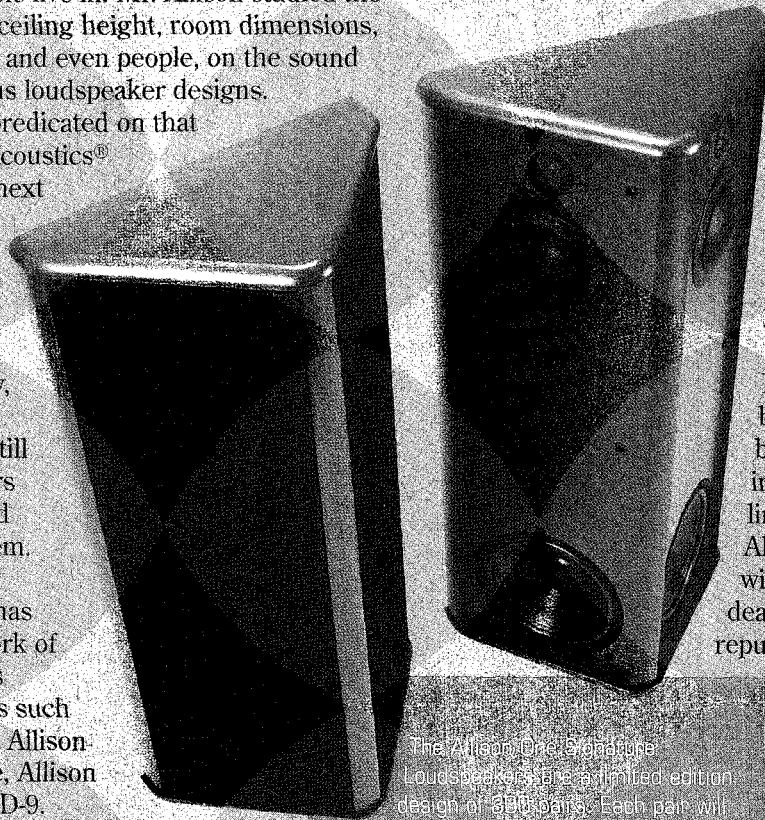
Last year a group of audiophiles, business people and sound engineers came together in Danville, Kentucky, just south of Lexington, to purchase the assets of Mr. Allison's original company. They wanted to reproduce the audio excellence that had been the stock-in-trade of Allison Acoustics.

The group quickly realized that their job of recreating that amazing clarity and imagery would be a great deal easier if Roy himself were part of the effort. A search was begun and Roy Allison was located, living in West Palm Beach, Florida in relative obscurity.

Coaxed out of retirement, Roy agreed to once again take the role of Chief Acoustic Engineer. The 55,000 square foot Allison® factory in Danville is now humming with the production of Roy Allison's patented loudspeakers. The first group of Allison One speakers is now ready for distribution to fine quality audio dealers everywhere. They have the same dual tweeters, dual mid-ranges and dual 10" woofers each as the original Allison Ones as updated by Mr. Allison in the 1980's to accommodate the

needs of digital technology. Only the enclosures have been changed, reflecting an updated, yet classic, design in a variety of fine furniture wood species.

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foods, animal testing of cosmetics, and pollution from jet engines, has had a direct impact on U.S. businesses.

Can a body with increasing responsibility and influence continue to uproot itself every month? Although Strasbourg presents a picturesque contrast to dreary Brussels, many MEPs say that meeting in the Belgian capital is more practical and efficient: both the European Commission and the Council of Ministers—the EU's third policy-making body, made up of EU government members—are based there.

Brussels also has far better air and rail links to other national capitals. Partly for this reason MEPs voted last year to cut plenary sessions in Strasbourg from five days a month to four; the gleaming new building now stands largely unused all but forty-eight days of the year. The supplemental sessions in Brussels each year are increasingly necessary; many parliamentarians hope to add more of them. "It's changing things by stealth, essentially," says David Martin, a British MEP and the EP's vice-president, who would like to do away with the Strasbourg sessions altogether.

But France is still on guard. In 1997 it successfully petitioned the European Court of Justice (the EU's highest court) to block efforts by the parliament to meet eleven rather than twelve times annually in Strasbourg. Because any move to concentrate parliamentary action in Brussels would require the approval of all EU governments, the current arrangement, or some variation on it, seems likely to persist. "There will never be unanimity; France will not accede," Marie-Hélène Gillig, a French MEP and a former deputy mayor of Strasbourg, told me firmly. Voicing an opinion shared by most French MEPs, Gillig argued that the monthly migration helps to avoid an unduly centralized EU bureaucracy. "Those who are against Strasbourg have a vision that's economic in the extreme," she said. "Europe should certainly avoid wasting money, but the construction of Europe involves something other than a vision that is merely based on economics."

For the foreseeable future, then, the European Parliament appears likely to remain on the go, and the size of its nighttime caravans will increase if the

EU takes on new members from Eastern Europe. After talking with Gillig, I came upon a sign in Strasbourg's main square citing British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's 1949 declaration that this was "a city which, more than any other, has been the victim of

the stupidity of the nations of Europe which thought they could solve their problems by waging war." Even though Strasbourg is no longer a victim but the scene of peaceful cooperation, it's hard not to wonder if a few of Bevin's words still apply. —MICHAEL Z. WISE

LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA

NEW LIFE FOR MOORE'S LAW

After four decades of remarkably steady progress, advances in computer-chip technology seemed in danger of slowing. Not anymore

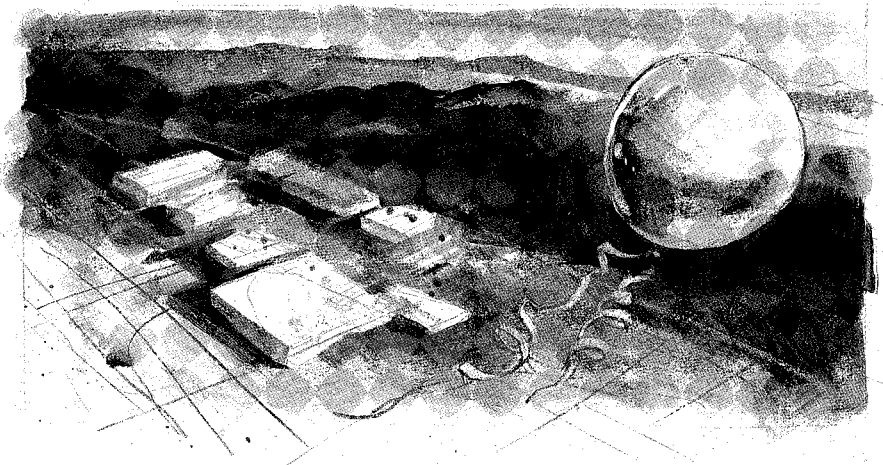
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I nterstate 580 connects Oakland, on San Francisco Bay, with Stockton and the farming towns of California's Central Valley. Heading east from Oakland, I-580 crosses the modest Coastal Range at the Altamont Pass. Altamont was famous a generation ago as the site of a Rolling Stones concert that turned into a riot. Now it features an eerie conjunction of two different kinds of "farming." Herds of cattle graze among thousands of pylons and derricks supporting giant propeller-shaped wind turbines—components of the world's largest "wind farm." When wind roars through the pass, the blades all turn, generating nearly enough electricity to power a city the size of San Francisco.

A series of low white buildings nearby adds to the sense that the area has been taken straight from a *Back to the Future* movie. These buildings, in the town of Livermore, house two national laboratories—Lawrence Livermore and the California branch of Sandia—where classified work on nuclear weapons and nuclear energy has been under way for

decades. Usually the labs are anything but welcoming. Visitors cannot bring laptops or cell phones onto the premises; airplanes are restricted from flying overhead. But one day last spring the fences surrounding the laboratories were decorated with balloons, like a house proclaiming a child's birthday party, and hand-lettered signs directed visitors to a celebratory reception. The occasion was the announcement of a technical achievement that may have surprising economic and political consequences.

The celebration was for the room-sized Engineering Test Stand—the first working prototype of a new system for producing semiconductor chips. What makes the Engineering Test Stand special is its use of "extreme ultraviolet" light, or EUV. In the thirty-plus years since the first mass production of computer chips, progress has been defined as the ability to fit more and more circuits into increasingly smaller spaces. This has been accomplished mainly by devising finer and finer tools for etching circuits onto the surface of a chip. Just as



a fine-point pen can put more words into a given space than a Magic Marker can, so the steady refinement of etching machines, or "steppers," has allowed the number of circuits per chip to go from a few thousand in the 1970s to tens of millions today.

However, throughout the past decade each move toward a better, finer stepper increased worries about how many more moves were possible. The fundamental limit to the size of circuits on a chip is tied to the wavelength of light used to etch the circuits. Existing chips were approaching that limit. X-ray beams have much shorter wavelengths than visible or ultraviolet light, but they are too destructive to be practical in etching. This is where EUV comes in.

EUV, which exists in the realm between visible light and x-rays, is a sort of domesticated x-ray. Its wavelength is short enough to allow the creation of extremely small circuits, and it is easier to work with than x-rays. But not that easy: EUV beams can't be transmitted through normal air, which absorbs them, and they can't be magnified or focused with normal lenses, which weaken and distort them.

The machine celebrated at Livermore works around these limitations. It transmits EUV beams through a vacuum, and it focuses them with extraordinarily smooth mirrors—ones whose surfaces have no irregularity greater in width than an atom. The wavelength of EUV is about a twentieth that of the light used in current steppers. Over time this should allow EUV lithography to create chips that have more than twenty times as many transistors as today's models and that run thirty times as fast.

The development of the EUV machine is the tech industry's equivalent of the discovery of a vast new oil reserve. To put it in the industry's own terms, it amounts to an extension of the principle known as Moore's Law. The modern computer and electronics industries have differed from most others in continually offering entirely new products—digital cameras, cellular phones—and continually driving down the price of what's already for sale. Behind these achievements lies Moore's

Law. This is the assertion, by Gordon Moore, a co-founder of Intel, that the computing power available on a given chip (or, in a variant, the power available for a given price) will double every eighteen months. To imagine this principle in any other context is to understand how remarkable it is: suppose that cars got twice as much mileage, or dropped by 50 percent in price, every year and a half.

Moore made his assertion at the dawn of the semiconductor age, in the 1960s. Since the early 1990s he and everyone else in the technology business have wondered when some problem such as the wavelength limit would "revoke" his law. The EUV etching machine does not mean that computer chips can keep doubling in capacity forever. But it probably gives Moore's Law at least another ten years.

The EUV prototype proves a scientific concept, rather than solving all the practical problems that stand in the way of commercial production. And it is not the only hope for the continuation of Moore's Law. For example, last summer researchers at Intel announced that they had found a way to keep making circuits smaller through adjustments in "conventional" technology. But whatever the case, the organization of the EUV project may prove to be as important as its discoveries: it suggests how the tech economy may tackle expensive research projects in the future.

The EUV effort was launched, in 1997, as a kind of supercollaboration among entities that usually keep a clear distance from one another. Three national labs—Sandia, Lawrence Livermore, and Lawrence Berkeley—pooled scientists, who worked in a "virtual national lab." All of the money for research and development—some \$250 million—came from private companies, ones that are ordinarily fierce rivals. Intel, the world's leading maker of logic chips, contributed—and so did AMD (originally Advanced Micro Devices), which is constantly launching technical, marketing, and even legal challenges to Intel's dominance. And so did Motorola and IBM and nearly every other important American semiconductor company. The cooperation was "wonderful,



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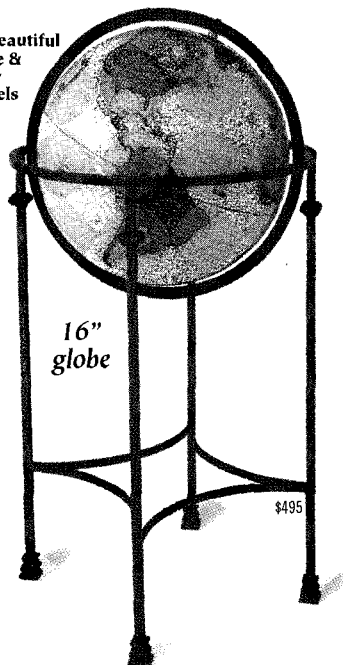
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heartwarming and just phenomenal," Craig Barrett, the CEO of Intel, said in a speech at the lab. Now, he added, members of the consortium would use the results of their shared research to "beat each other over the head in the marketplace—which is as it should be."

The only notable absentees from the lineup were the Japanese firms Nikon and Canon, whose steppers are now used by Intel, AMD, and everyone else. They were left out because part of the impulse behind the EUV project was to stimulate the revival of a U.S.-based stepper industry. The politicians, mainly Democrats, who endorse such collaborations between government and business through "industrial policy" could therefore claim EUV as their success. They could, in fact, claim it as their second important victory of this sort. Ten years earlier the major American computer-chip makers had joined in a research consortium known as Sematech. The companies put up tens of millions of dollars for the development of new chip-making systems; the government matched their funds; and the results greatly improved the U.S. companies' position relative to Japanese and Korean competitors. Although it was mainly a Democratic effort, Sematech began at the end of the Reagan Administration. So Republicans can share the credit for it if they want to—and they can claim EUV as an even clearer vindication of their policies. After all, crucial parts of the EUV technology emerged from research on Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative.

In practical terms the difference between the Democratic and Republican versions of the EUV story may not really matter. Gordon Moore has warned for years that the challenge in maintaining Moore's Law will be not just technical but financial. The products of the computer industry get cheaper and cheaper, but the installations necessary to manufacture them steadily mount in price. That companies as strong as IBM and Intel needed to pool resources for this project suggests that collaboration will be the rule—among companies and with the government. This will be so whether the results are credited to "industrial policy" or to "strategic defense." —JAMES FALLOWS

CAIR PARAVEL, NARNIA

IN DEFENSE OF C. S. LEWIS

A rebuttal of recent denunciations of the classic Chronicles of Narnia as racist, misogynistic, "poisonous" works

.....

The glistening citadel of this date-line does not in fact exist, but to children it can be more real than many an actual place: Cair Paravel is the capital of Narnia, the setting of what was, until Harry Potter, the world's best-selling fantasy series. The seven-volume *Chronicles of Narnia*, by the mid-century Irish writer C. S. Lewis, has some 65 million copies in print in thirty languages. In the books several English schoolchildren are transported to a realm where a human society modeled on the Arthurian court co-exists with strange creatures, intelligent animals, and magic. Always the young visitors perform some improbable feat to rescue the kingdom from sinister forces. Presiding over events is Aslan, an enormous supernatural lion who called forth Narnia, loves English schoolchildren, and appears whenever hope seems lost.

Although Narnia has survived countless perils, the *Chronicles* themselves are now endangered. On one front they face the dubious honor of corporate marketing. On another literary voices have begun to denounce them as racist and sexist works. What's in progress is a struggle of sorts for the soul of children's fantasy literature.

American readers may already know of the corporate designs on Narnia. *The New York Times* reported in the spring that the publishing conglomerate HarperCollins, which recently acquired the rights to Lewis's work, plans a major marketing push for the *Chronicles*. Toy stores will be inundated with Narnia plush, and HarperCollins will commission new volumes for the series. Any parent who has encountered one of the odious Winnie-the-Pooh movies produced by Disney—sitcom and psychobabble invade the Hundred Acre Wood—will gasp at the thought of the HarperCollins marketing department's deciding it knows better than C. S. Lewis

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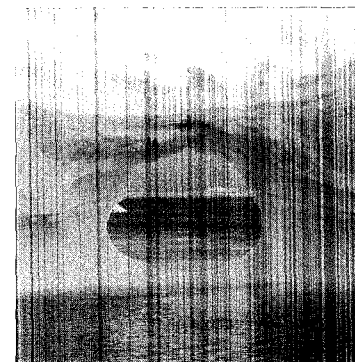
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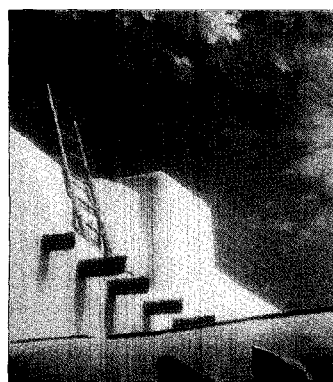
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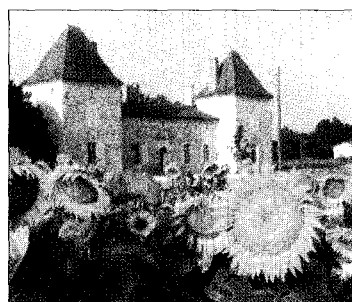
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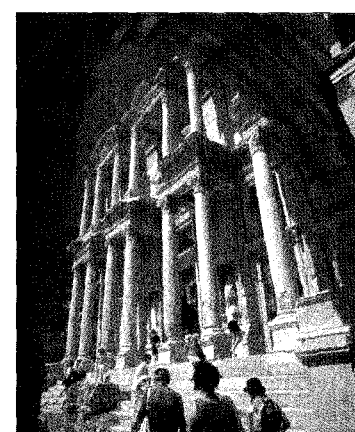
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did what constitutes *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Besides, Narnia's world was destroyed when its dying sun exploded, in the final volume of the *Chronicles*. This would seem to preclude sequels—but hey, who wants to be a stickler?

Furthermore, HarperCollins intends to soft-pedal the spiritual subtext of the *Chronicles*. Lewis, a prolific writer of Christian commentary, enfolded religious themes into the stories, allowing children to read them as adventure yarns and adults to appreciate the symbolism. In one book Aslan dies and is resurrected; in another he appears as a lamb and serves the children roast fish, the meal Jesus requested after the Resurrection. According to a HarperCollins memo quoted in the *Times*, concerning a proposed documentary, the publisher deems it essential that “no attempt will be made to correlate the stories to Christian imagery/theology.”

Only British readers are likely to be familiar with the *Chronicles*' second tribulation: critics attacking the books' reputation. The centenary of Lewis's birth was widely celebrated in England in 1998, but amid the general affection was prominent dissent. The novelist and critic Philip Hensher, a rising figure in the London literary establishment (he's a Booker Prize judge), censured the *Chronicles* as “poisonous” and “ghastly, priggish, half-witted” books intended to “corrupt the minds of the young with allegory.” Corruption by allegory? Bailiff, take him away! Never mind that one of Hensher's own books, *Kitchen Venom* (1996), all but glorifies pederasty. What Hensher meant by corrupting the young was exposing them to what he derided as “Lewis's creed of clean-living, muscular Christianity.”

Hensher's broadside is part of a fad of anti-Narnia writing in Britain. The offensive has been led by Philip Pullman, whose *The Golden Compass* (1996), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000)—the *His Dark Materials* trilogy—are the most important recent works in the English fantasy tradition (*The Golden Compass* won the Carnegie Medal, Britain's top award for children's literature). Pullman has deplored the “misogyny” and the “racism” of the *Chronicles*, which, he claims, reek of a

“sneering attitude to anything remotely progressive in social terms or to people with brown faces.” He has called Lewis a bigot, his devotees “unhinged,” the *Chronicles* “appalling” and “nauseating drivel”; and he went so far as to complain that Lewis made a technical error in a joke about how centaurs eat breakfast. A technical error about an imaginary creature?

Both Lewis's and Pullman's series take place on earth and in a parallel world; both have as protagonists astonishingly capable children; and the subtext of both is the search for the divine. But in Lewis's books children seek the divine in order to experience happiness and perfect love, whereas in Pullman's trilogy they seek it in order to destroy



it. The plots of *His Dark Materials* are driven by the premise that God is evil—a celestial impostor who pretends to have created the universe and who so intensely hates flesh and blood that he wants people to live a repressed, joyless existence followed by hell, even for the righteous. Christian illusions about God are to blame for all the world's miseries; Christianity is “a very powerful and convincing mistake, that's all,” one character declares. The protagonists in the books strive to acquire ancient, mysterious objects they can use to bring about God's death. Along the way children are tortured and murdered, often with Church approval.

Perhaps we'd rather not know what

it says about the postwar literary drift that 1950s fantasy concerned children who make common cause with a loving divine, and today's presents children who engage in grim battle against an immoral God bent on oppression. Moreover, this change occurred over a period in which Western children's living standards, education, health, and freedom improved dramatically. Still, good questions remain about whether the *Chronicles* really are racist, sexist, and overbearing about religion.

There's no denying that Narnia is an Anglo Anglican's fantasy. The realm is forested and cool—“Narnia and the North!” is a rallying cry—and threatened by encroaching southern cultures. The principal bad guys, the Calormenes, are unmistakable Muslim stand-ins: bearded desert dwellers who spread oil rather than butter on their bread. The sociological structure of Narnia is aristocratic and favors British imperialism. Aslan decrees that the Golden Age of Narnia will begin when “Sons of Adam and Daughters of Eve” sit on the thrones at Cair Paravel; because the portals to Narnia are in England, this means, in effect, that Brits must rule.

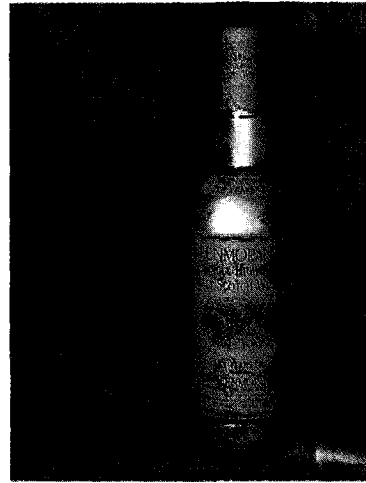
The *Chronicles* record the deeds of two fearless heroines, Lucy and Jill, but they also contain numerous digs at feminism. When Lewis spoofs the postwar anti-traditionalist movement by having Jill attend a school called Experiment House, he gives the school a headmistress, which is supposed to signal its absurdity.

I have three children, aged six to twelve, and a few months ago I finished reading the *Chronicles* to them. Even as a fan I must admit that certain passages made me wince. For example, the wicked dwarfs ridicule the Calormenes as “darkies”; I skirted the word, because I don't want it in my kids' heads. But does having characters say “darkies” make Lewis racist? He was, after

all, employing language then in common parlance—and placing it in the mouths of the wicked. “Many older books contain race or gender references discordant to modern ears,” John G. West Jr., a co-editor of *The C. S. Lewis Reader’s Encyclopedia*, told me recently. “We don’t stop reading Twain or Darwin because they used racial terms no author uses today.”

While reading aloud I also reworded what is to Narnia’s detractors the most objectionable passage, which occurs near the end of the series. In it Susan, a heroine in early books, does not ascend directly to heaven with the other children, because she is “no longer a friend of Narnia ... she’s interested in nothing now-a-days except nylons and lipstick and invitations.” Lewis, a bachelor until late in life, when he married a Jewish-born divorcee (hardly the choice of a Christian bigot), had conflicted views about women and seems to have held his character’s sexual independence against her. But does leaving Susan back in London attending dull parties make him sexist? It’s hardly unrealistic to craft a character whose priority is socializing. Recently Pullman cited the Susan passage in denouncing the Narnia books to a reporter for *The Washington Post*, saying that for Lewis, a girl’s achieving sexual maturity was “so dreadful and so redolent of sin that he had to send her to Hell.” But the *Chronicles* don’t send Susan to hell. She just doesn’t participate in the special ascension that other characters experience. Instead she continues with normal life and, presumably, joins her companions in paradise later.

In Narnia, after all, heaven has an open-door policy. In the final book of the *Chronicles*, Emeth, a noble Calormene, dies trying to save others. Emeth (“Truth” in Hebrew) then finds himself in heaven, being praised by Aslan, and asks why he has been permitted to enter when in life he worshipped in a rival faith. Aslan tells Emeth that the specifics of religion do not matter: virtue is what’s important, and paradise awaits anyone of good will. This seems an up-to-date message—and a reason the Narnia books should stand exactly as they are. —GREGG EASTERBROOK



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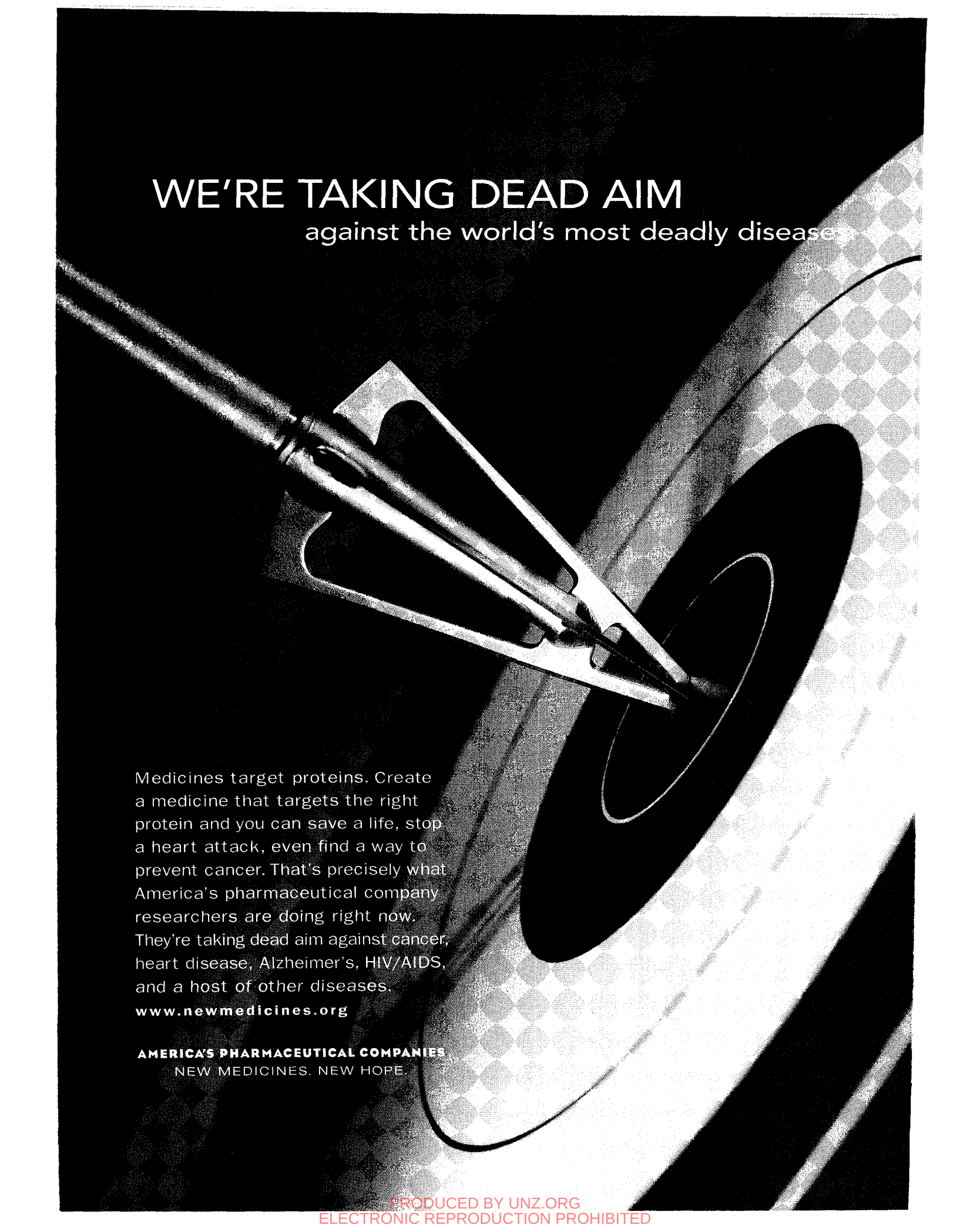
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PEACE IS HELL

Every six months the Pentagon sends nearly 4,000 soldiers to Bosnia and brings nearly 4,000 soldiers home. To see how it's done is to understand why keeping peace has become harder than waging war—and why the Pax Americana has stretched the mighty American military to the limit

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

.....

One day last fall in Bosnia, I met a lieutenant in the U.S. Army, a peacekeeper there, who said he worried about America's role in the world. He was a big, blond Californian, nearly thirty years old, who had risen through the enlisted ranks before qualifying for his commission. Now he was leading a U.S. infantry patrol through a sullen town named Bratunac, on a slow walk at dusk toward the central square. He could have driven there, but had parked his armored Humvees in an outlying neighborhood and proceeded on foot, because contact with the townspeople was said to be an important part of the job. In practice, though, the contact was limited by orders that required GIs to remain armed, helmeted, and clothed in their camouflaged combat gear. During the walk to the central square the only Bosnians who got close were a few audacious children asking for gum and candy, which the soldiers were forbidden to hand out. This was how it normally went, the lieutenant said. Most of the adults ignored the Americans, and some gave them hostile stares; many believed, erroneously, that the United States had become a force of occupation. Later in the evening the lieutenant was due to appear on a radio talk show during which he was supposed to encourage people to turn in their hoarded weapons—promoting a civic ideal that hardly anyone could believe in. He had been given a script that required him to report on a few recently surrendered guns, as if this truly indicated progress toward a better future.

The lieutenant was a willing soldier, but somewhat disillusioned. He had been trained as an infantryman to close with the enemy and fight, and instead now found himself doing the work of a street-corner diplomat. It was not just that he felt individually unsuited to the role; he said that the entire brigade, 3,500 strong, had lost its war-fighting ability and would require six months of retraining upon returning home. I was a bit skeptical about that claim, which is often made, but I also knew that it was not entirely without merit. These soldiers had already spent six months in specialized training before coming to Bosnia, during which they had

been encouraged to unlearn the standard kill-or-die mentality, and had been allowed to neglect their traditional military skills. The most perishable of those skills did not consist of shooting guns but, rather, involved the complex organizational interactions necessary to coordinate large groups of embattled fighters. In Bosnia the soldiers had indeed been forced to set much of that aside. Still, the claim that great damage was being done was not quite convincing. I asked, "How can a unit forget those skills so quickly?" The lieutenant shrugged. There was the problem of turnover, which in the U.S. military is high. There was also the inherent intricacy of battlefield scenarios, specifically those played out in the war games by which the Army evaluates its abilities. The lieutenant asked, "Why does an orchestra have to practice?" What he was practicing here in Bratunac was mostly just how to police other troubled towns—a safe enough job for him, but one that he saw as dangerously open-ended for the United States.

His soldiers may have shared those views, but they were less inclined to talk. It had started to rain, as usual. They walked through the streets with their weapons slung muzzle-down and their expressions closed off in a manner I recognized from the faces of other front-line peacekeepers—not battle-hardened or numb but stoic and stubbornly unexpectant. The Balkans mission was right or wrong depending on one's political bent, but in military terms it was mostly just unheroic. Today the assignment was to drive to this town, walk through this town, let the lieutenant talk on the radio, and eventually drive away. It was hardly worth comment beyond the standard "Okay. Roger. Got it." A peacekeeper's job was to wait out the hours. If he followed orders and stuck strictly to the task at hand, he could enjoy the implicit respect for privacy and the solitude that quietly grace American military life. If he dressed correctly, he could stay warm and dry.

But the lieutenant was a worrier. He brought up the subject of empires, Roman, Spanish, British. He recognized an important difference between those dead empires and



Peacekeeping patrol, Bosnia

this new Pax Americana. The old empires were direct exercises in territorial domination, cultural subjugation, and the extraction of wealth. In contrast, the American reason for being in a place like Bosnia, though perhaps based on calculations of national self-interest, is to a large degree altruistic. The United States goes in, enforces the peace, helps to fix things up, and leaves—or that's the intention, even if, case by case, things have never quite worked out that way. With his ground-level view of the process, the lieutenant was uncertain that these interventions could be sustained in the long run. He told me he had heard that one way to kill a tiger is to distract it from so many different sides that it tries to run in every direction at once.

It wasn't surprising that the image had stuck in his mind. He was patrolling the streets of an obscure little town at a time when the fighting force he represented—the U.S. military—was the most powerful in the world, prepared to wage even simultaneous wars, yet was also worried about the burden of low-risk assignments like this one. Since 1989 the United States has engaged in only two significant fights: the Gulf War and the air action against Serbia, both of which turned out to be almost too easy. The Pentagon complains that the number of its overseas “deployments” has tripled in recent years, neglecting to mention that many of the missions are minuscule, and consist of sending off

just a few instructors or engineers. If they're camped in a hotel for long enough, it counts. Still, the worry about overextension is real, and it reflects one of the stranger ideas of our time—that for the American military the apparently trivial problem of peacekeeping has recently proved to be more difficult even than waging war.

A MISPLACED PATCH OF AMERICA

It is not immediately clear how this could be. In the Bosnia peacekeeping operation, where after six years the cumulative effects on the military have been the greatest, there have been no deaths by hostile fire, and the soldiers have settled into a surprisingly comfortable routine. The American headquarters there is called Eagle Base. It is housed at a former Yugoslavian air base that sprawls across a farmed plateau among low, forested hills near the failed industrial city of Tuzla, several hours' drive north of the capital, Sarajevo. It has a long runway, a few remaining fortified MiG hangars, and about forty usable Communist-era buildings made of reinforced concrete. After so many years under the American flag, it also now has a collection of large steel-framed buildings, a pristine airport terminal, a full-time fire department with shiny red fire engines brought over from the United States, and hundreds of new wood-framed structures, all painted the same chocolate-brown.

Eagle Base is known as a “temporary camp,” but the water is pure, the electricity is reliable, and the buildings are heated and cooled. Two thousand American soldiers live there, on six-month rotations. They are assisted by a giant American contractor named Brown & Root, which employs an equal number of local civilians to act as interpreters for the patrols and to perform almost all of the manual labor—cooking, cleaning, gardening, construction, vehicle maintenance—that is required to keep the camp running.

The soldiers live in surprising isolation. Those who go out on patrol are generally forbidden to sit in cafés, to shop in the local markets, or to socialize with the Bosnians. Two thirds of the soldiers never even go out on patrols, and live almost entirely restricted to the base, where they serve in “support” roles as guards and office workers, and seem to spend most of their leisure time eating and then trying to lose weight. Bosnia for them is a wooded campus that takes about twenty minutes to walk across. Although the environs of Eagle Base are safe, the installation is surrounded by an illuminated and guarded perimeter fence, seven miles around, with only three gates, all of which are strictly controlled. The confinement gets old. But when soldiers talk about tough duty in Bosnia, they usually mean General Order #1—a nearly total prohibition on alcohol for American troops. Beyond that it’s hard to pretend that they’re roughing it.

To someone unaccustomed to life in today’s Army, Eagle Base is rather unexpectedly elaborate. It has a Burger King, a Baskin-Robbins, an Anthony’s Pizza, a few cappuccino cafés (one with a terrace, called The Rendez-Vous), an alcohol-free bar called Triggers, two movie theaters, an Internet café, several large sports facilities (including all the exercise machines and weights an army could possibly use), a short shopping street of jewelry and trinket stores, a richly stocked post-exchange department store, a continuing-education center with courses accredited by the City Colleges of Chicago and the University of Maryland, two radio stations, one of which broadcasts the National Public Radio programs *All Things Considered* and *Car Talk* (among others), lots of satellite TV, and two large twenty-four-hour dining facilities with racks groaning under a wealth of food. It also has live entertainment, recently including Hootie & the Blowfish, Tonic, Kimberly Burns, a Christian rock band, Christie Brinkley, a touring group of aging Miss Americas still in good form, and various professional cheerleaders. Some of the GIs even complained to me about the excess of luxury. They tended to be especially skeptical of Brown & Root, which seemed to cater perhaps too eagerly to the Army’s every desire. One of the soldiers in charge of Eagle Base said, “You mention, ‘Gee, it’d be nice to keep out of the mud going up to the sandwich shop,’ and next thing you know they’ve built a whole wooden walkway with railings and indirect lighting, and then they’ve gone in and *landscaped* the damned thing.”

Eagle Base has five smaller outposts, which offer much the

same view in compressed form. When soldiers feel the need for variation, they can ride a bus a mile down the road to a helicopter-and-logistics base called Comanche, which has a “western” theme, with a post office labeled PONY EXPRESS and a café made up to look like a ski lodge. Escorted day trips to Sarajevo and Tuzla are available, but not many soldiers seem to bother. Some of the young recruits have never been overseas before, and they seem mostly just relieved to be taken care of. They miss drinking beer but enjoy the hazardous-duty bonus and the tax-free pay. They talk about the money they’re saving and the cars they’ll buy when they get home. In the meantime, they inhabit a place that feels familiar, a strangely misplaced patch of the United States.

THE GOLIATH SYNDROME

The effort of building and sustaining such a place does not in itself daunt American logisticians. After all, the U.S. military is used to operating on a very big scale. If the Department of Defense were a company, it would be the largest by far in the United States: it wields an annual budget of \$300 billion, and it provides jobs for 1.4 million active-duty soldiers, 1.3 million members of the National Guard and reserves, and 672,000 civilians who are directly on the payroll. It owns more than 40,000 properties worldwide, including 250 bases, and 39,000 square miles of land—about the size of Kentucky. It operates and maintains 250,000 ground vehicles, 15,000 aircraft, about 150 satellites, and more than 1,000 oceangoing vessels. It runs 225 high schools and elementary schools. It provides day care for 200,000 children. It fits 50,000 pairs of boots every month. It serves 41 million meals a year, and provides food allowances for many more.

If one purpose of all this is to wage wars, and preferably far away, an equally important purpose is to project power around the globe in peacetime. This is an ambition that often comes down to the simple expediency of sending in the troops. Even the smallest of such efforts requires an almost unfathomable depth of details—all the “eaches,” as one Army officer kept telling me, that are involved in an actual deployment. Each soldier must be briefed, trained, equipped, and clothed, often specially; must be medically and legally prepared; must have his family taken care of or, if he is single, have his car and household goods stored; and must be told what to pack and what not to. Then he must have his equipment transported, the heavy stuff by ship; must himself be “lifted” to his destination; and must be fed and supplied for the duration of the mission. In theory this is simple. In practice it is immensely complicated.

During World War II the average soldier dragged along sixty pounds of supplies. By a half century later, during the relatively minor Gulf War, that weight had risen nearly sevenfold, to 400 pounds. For peacetime operations the load varies, but it is unlikely to be much lighter. The “tooth to tail” ratio of front-line troops to support personnel is cur-

rently 1:7—a fact of U.S. military operations that causes legitimate concern about inefficiency but also reflects the physical difficulty of projecting power overseas. No one knows better than the Pentagon that the world remains a very big place, and that it's expensive to police. The yearly cost of maintaining the U.S. military presence abroad is estimated to be \$28.6 billion a year, of which \$4.2 billion in the 2001 Pentagon budget is earmarked for ongoing "contingencies"—peacekeeping and enforcing the Iraqi no-fly zones. These are tricky numbers, presupposing a distinction between domestic and international expenditures that does not naturally exist in a military designed at every level to exert power around the globe. Aren't the nuclear missiles in Montana, the reserve ships in Virginia, and the Marine Corps training facilities on Parris Island all part of the Balkan equation? The accounting quickly becomes arbitrary.

Though the number of soldiers overseas has been reduced by two thirds since the end of the Cold War, the missions are more varied than ever before, and by any reasonable standard the force levels abroad remain large. The precise totals change by the day, but according to the most recently published information (for December, 2000), the United States currently has 263,072 members of the

to include soldiers who are engaged in preparing for or supporting the mission from within the United States, and the scale remains relatively small. This is not to imply that the peacekeeping assignment has been easy, or that it could have been. Sending even 4,000 soldiers to a place like Bosnia—and then sustaining them there—is necessarily a big and difficult job. But still, it's surprising that missions on this scale could overburden the mighty U.S. military.

I went to Bosnia to try to understand. During my stay there most of the troops belonged to the Second Brigade of the mechanized 3rd Infantry Division, an armor-heavy combat force out of Fort Stewart, Georgia, that had assumed the Bosnia mission for two consecutive tours. At its full state-side complement the 3rd ID consists of something over 20,000 full-time soldiers and easily twice that number in dependent families and civilian employees. At its core it contains three "maneuver" brigades of 3,500 soldiers each, who fight primarily in M1-A1 tanks and Bradley armored personnel carriers. There are thirty-three such maneuver brigades in the regular Army, and an additional forty-two in the Army National Guard—and together they constitute the military spine of the United States. The three within the 3rd ID are backed up by a powerful divisional artillery, a

THE U.S. MILITARY IS THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL FIGHTING FORCE, PREPARED TO WAGE EVEN SIMULTANEOUS WARS. YET IT IS WORRIED ABOUT THE BURDEN OF LOW-RISK ASSIGNMENTS LIKE THE BOSNIA MISSION—AND THE CONCERN ABOUT OVEREXTENSION IS REAL.

armed forces overseas; about half of them are stationed at the huge bases in Germany, Japan, and South Korea, and more than 50,000 others (sailors and Marines) live on ships. The remaining forces are divided among 138 countries, and are involved in formal peacekeeping missions in five of those: Egypt (Sinai), Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and East Timor. These troops are not expected to eat the local food or sleep on bare ground. They are volunteers in a peacetime force, and they have to be given some semblance of an American life—to be provided with good tools to do their jobs, protected, housed, entertained, and afforded more than minimal comforts and supplies.

But for all the strain that peacekeeping is said to cause the military, the really striking thing is not how large the numbers are but how small. There are fewer than 4,000 American soldiers on the ground in Bosnia at any one time, and only about 6,000 in Kosovo. It's true that in both places the American share of the burden is carried now almost entirely by a single branch of the military, the U.S. Army. But the Army is a very big branch, more than a million soldiers strong, including its reserves. By rough calculation, if it maintains a force of 10,000 in the Balkans on the standard six-month rotations, its presence in the region amounts to merely 20,000 soldiers a year—less than a fifth of the Army's total strength. Double or triple that figure

squadron of attack and transport helicopters, and masses of supply and support units. They are also supplemented by reservists and National Guardsmen and by a complex combination of soldiers attached from elsewhere in the armed forces. When it can all be brought to bear, as happened during the Gulf War, the 3rd ID turns out to be a fighting machine of impressive destructive power. But Bosnia was showing it in another light.

The problem was partly just personality. These were soldiers who liked to blow things up. It's what they had enlisted to do, what they had been trained to do—and what they could not even pretend to do in Bosnia. The helicopter crews were restricted from flying low, mounting their door guns, or hovering in a menacing way. The few dozen tanks and Bradleys to which the ground troops had access were not their regular ones from Georgia but orphans that remained in Bosnia for each new rotation to use. The vehicles were confined to motor pools and let out only for short maintenance runs. The peacekeeping patrols drove around not in tracked vehicles equipped with cannons but in armored Humvees with 50-caliber machine guns mounted in turrets on the roofs. The armored Humvees may have been intimidating to the local population, but to the soldiers they did not seem particularly impressive. The soldiers did not feel vulnerable in their Humvees so much as awkward and out of



An armoured Humvee

place. They were like football players invited to play croquet.

The division was simply not used to operating on such a small and delicate scale. The 3rd ID's stateside strength of 20,000 was equal to the *combined* strength of the entire thirty-three-nation coalition keeping the peace in Bosnia. That coalition—known as SFOR (pronounced *S-for*), for “stabilization force,” and based in Sarajevo—was NATO-led and operated under a complicated system of parallel commands. Although the United States provided the biggest contingent, the U.S. Army actually had direct responsibility for only the northeastern third of the country—and even there it was supplemented by substantial units of Scandinavian, Polish, Turkish, and Russian troops, all working under the direction of Eagle Base. For the 3rd ID this meant that only a fifth of its soldiers were needed in Bosnia at any one time. The rest remained at Fort Stewart, where, even as units prepared for peacekeeping runs, or reorganized following completed ones, the majority of the soldiers continued to train for what everyone agreed was the division's primary purpose: fighting high-intensity battles against conventional foes, presumably in defense of the nation.

That was hardly what the Bosnian job was about. It was a small police action during which very few of the division's war-fighting skills would be called upon. Even so, the core of the division's headquarters staff (including the top two

of its three generals and several of its most effective colonels) had been sent off to Eagle Base, where it had the equivalent of a mere brigade to command. This surfeit of high-ranking officers reflected a top-heaviness that existed throughout the SFOR coalition, starting in Sarajevo, where the headquarters for an entire corps had been set up to command the equivalent of a mere division. The formal explanation for such a structure was that it allowed for a rapid buildup of forces should the need suddenly arise. The informal explanation was that it resulted from international one-upmanship within the coalition, a sort of rank-ratcheting that goes on among the various militaries. Either way, experience had shown that with so many egos involved, the United States needed to bring in its generals to get things done.

For the generals themselves, the experience was therefore somewhat hollow. That wouldn't necessarily matter, but the staff tended to fill the void with foam, involving top officers in unimportant details—the mess-hall menu, for instance, or incidents of aggressive driving on the local roads, or some petty fistfight between street thugs in a village far away. At Eagle Base, where even a broken-down Humvee could show up in the daily “battle update briefing,” the information got as tedious as hell. The major general (two-star) in command of the 3rd ID, a diminutive, soft-spoken man named Walter

"Skip" Sharp, who had been sent to Bosnia for a full year, implied to me that the division as a whole was having a hard time staying on track during the Bosnian deployment.

Its problem was not only with this Bosnia mission but also with an upcoming tour in Kosovo—two assignments that between them now threatened to undermine the war-readiness of the entire 3rd ID, at least by the Army's conventional standards. Sharp's job was not to argue with those standards but to try to meet them. They involved items as mundane as adequate tank-gunnery scores—normally just a matter of practice, but difficult to achieve when a third of the tankers were occupied pulling guard duty and driving Humvees in the Balkans, or getting ready to. The peacekeepers *were* learning some war-fighting skills—how to operate in nearly autonomous small units, for instance, or to work in an international coalition—but the Army was not equipped to evaluate them. Whether these untested, unmeasurable skills would be of use in future wars was something for academics to think about—as, indeed, was the nature of those future wars, and perhaps the definition of readiness.

Meanwhile, Skip Sharp was an officer on the front lines of American policy. He accepted the mission in Bosnia not as an exception but as part of the historical duty of the U.S. Army. The truth is that the military has long been given jobs like this—rescues, restorations, the suppression of brush fires in faraway places. And though the definition of altruism has evolved, and the thresholds for intervention have apparently been raised by the Bush Administration, as long as the United States remains a great power with an interest in global stability, the military will continue to get similar jobs. Sharp had commanded peacekeepers before, in Haiti in 1994, and he understood the symbolic and operational importance of his presence on Bosnian soil. Peacekeeping is an extension of politics by similar means. Sharp was not a natural politician but an organization man, and like the Army itself, he was willing to work within an agenda set by others.

That didn't make his job any easier. Even the divisional artillery, which had stayed behind in Georgia but had been saddled with training the peacekeepers, was having trouble meeting its normal war-fighting requirements. Sharp held videoconferences with his subordinates back at Fort Stewart and managed occasionally to take a quick trip home; but he felt the distance, and he must have known that the entire division was losing ground. He never said this to me, but it was obvious that many of the officers in both Georgia and Bosnia, although they had not exactly lost perspective on the peacekeeping mission, had been unable to respond to it in a reasonable and measured way. Faced with what they considered to be a strange and ambiguous mission, they tended to overreact collectively—in training the troops and then maintaining them on the ground. Significantly, as individuals the officers knew they were overreacting but felt powerless to stop. Rather than peacekeeping itself, it was this institutional effect that seemed to be something new.

THE JUST-PLAIN ARMY

Earlier, in Georgia, I had watched a unit of the 3rd ID leave Fort Stewart, bound for Bosnia and Eagle Base—a planeload of 280 soldiers constituting the final group to head out on the division's first Balkan rotation, at the close of a long and arduous preparation. They assembled in a brown-brick gymnasium on a bright morning, wearing their helmets, flak vests, and combat uniforms, and carrying a variety of weapons. They had magnetic SFOR identity cards and bar-coded labels on their duffel bags. A few of them had families outside, and wandered off to say good-bye, but most just milled around and waited. A line of seven white school buses pulled into the parking lot to haul them away. The divisional band eventually showed up with its instruments. The mood was noticeably low-key, but the 3rd ID is like that anyway. It's the just-plain Army, the real thing, and it doesn't strut.

Fort Stewart doesn't strut either, in part because it's so ugly. Soldiers call it Camp Swampy, without affection. It is the largest Army base east of the Mississippi, a 436-square-mile expanse of discarded forest, cut by tank tracks, roads, and firing ranges. It is flat, featureless, and relentlessly hot for much of the year. An unhappy little town called Hinesville presses up hard against the main gate with pawnshops, car lots, and fast-food joints, displaying billboards of the "God Bless Our Boys" variety while mercilessly inflating the apartment rents of the many soldiers who live off the base.

Fort Stewart, by comparison, is a decent place. Its main post is a town unto itself, stretching through a maze of streets for several miles beyond the gate, with a mixture of classic white-painted wooden buildings from World War II and unadorned modern structures built of brick. Beyond the core district of headquarters buildings and dining facilities it contains housing for 14,000 people, ranging from dormitory-style barracks for single enlisted men to expansive ranch-style houses for the senior officers and their families. It has a child-care center, two kindergartens, two elementary schools, a mosque, five Christian chapels (one used for Jewish services), a hospital, two medical clinics, two dental clinics, a veterinary clinic, a kennel, a stable, a bank, a credit union, a U.S. post office, a library, three theaters, a slew of fast-food restaurants, a department store, a car wash, an auto-repair garage, several gas stations, seven convenience stores, a liquor store, a clothing store, two dry cleaners, two barber-shops, two bowling alleys (one with a lounge), a museum, a golf course, four swimming pools, many gymnasiums and weight rooms, a tennis center, a recreational pond with plumbed camping sites, an outdoor recreational-equipment rental center, an arts-and-crafts shop, an officers' club, a club for enlisted soldiers, a teen club, and a rod-and-gun club, with associated skeet, rifle, and archery ranges.

All this is dwarfed by Fort Stewart's business end—vast motor pools strung along the roads, where the equipment that makes the 3rd ID "mechanized" stands in seemingly



Tank motor pool, Fort Stewart

endless rows. The motor pools contain hundreds upon hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles, earthmovers, cranes, self-propelled artillery pieces, and trucks and Humvees of a bewildering variety, including large numbers of heavy-duty “recovery” vehicles for towing the machines home when they break down—which they routinely do, all over the place. Most of the equipment is painted desert tan, because of the 3rd ID’s regular responsibility for protecting the oil fields of the Persian Gulf—an appropriate role for such machines, in poetic as well as tactical terms. This is the industrial side of America’s military complex, the extension of politics through sheer mechanical weight. A tank commander said to me, “We’re not talking guerrilla warfare here. We can go as deep as we want so long as we’ve got the fuel. But we leave havoc behind—just absolute chaos. When we go through, it changes the face of the earth.” Another tanker I spoke to was maybe less thoughtful. He said, “You put this fuckin’ tank on a street corner somewhere, and the United States *owns* it. I guaran-fuckin-tee it.” He was probably right. But, of course, the United States does not want to own Bosnia. In fact, it would like to *disown* it. And even he could not ignore that his tank would have been of little use there.

The soldiers at Fort Stewart seemed strange to me at first—the way they hurried around the post in their over-

shined bulb-toed combat boots, dressed in camouflage, repeating unit mottoes (“Rock of the Marne!” or “Heart of the Rock!”) as sidewalk greetings, and affecting impractical little “soft caps,” which they removed indoors to reveal their radical, disfiguring haircuts. The men wore those haircuts—shaved high up the sides but with a growth left on top—like badges, indicating their commitment to the soldiering life. The women were not allowed to do the same, but they kept their hair tied up tight, wore no jewelry or makeup, and worked hard at fitting in. Both sexes talked gruffly about needing to *lean forward in the foxhole*, meaning “to anticipate,” and to *break contact*, meaning “to leave.” I guessed it was a gang thing. These were people who had traded their independence for the dictates of a group, who perhaps had sought ritual, and who now seemed to inhabit a narrow culture so marginalized, despite the patriotism surrounding it, that their plainness had become a sort of vanity in itself.

There may have been some truth to those first impressions. But as I grew accustomed to Fort Stewart, I came to appreciate the culture in quite another way, not merely for its Spartan virtue but also for its spirit of inclusion—a progressive and practical response to the enormous diversity in the ranks. That diversity exists to a degree rarely found elsewhere in the United States. Beyond a glaring lack of

volunteers from America's upper classes, the soldiers of the 3rd ID came from all corners of the country and from many walks of life, with 20,000 reasons for having joined the Army and as many reactions to the experience now. They had signed away their independence but not their individuality, their knowledge of civilian life, or the complexity of their thoughts. Their plainness in that light was not a vanity after all but a necessary extension of the soldier's uniform—a manifestation of the unusual egalitarianism that seems to exist within the Army.

It's not that the hierarchy has been blurred, or that, as one officer in Bosnia complained to me, "the force has to sit around now holding hands, singing *Kum-ba-yah*." But there is within the Army an unmistakable sense that the playing field has been leveled. It was not by chance that at Fort Stewart the tensions among races and ethnicities had almost entirely melted away, and that women, too, were gaining acceptance as integrated members of the fighting force.

In any case, of the 280 soldiers assembled for departure that morning in the gym, I have no idea how many were black, Hispanic, or white. It was hard enough to tell which ones were women, or where the officers were. They all wore the same cumbersome combat gear ("battle rattle," they call it, for the noise it makes when they move), and they stood mixed together with their heads half buried in their Kevlar helmets, watching the time pass slowly until the check-in was completed. The officer in charge was Colonel Louis "Bill" Weber, age forty-seven, a rugged, good-humored Texan whose background included front-line fighting in the Gulf War along with peacekeeping stints in Lebanon and Haiti, and who now, as commander of the

division's Second Brigade, was set to assume direct operational responsibility for most of the American soldiers in Bosnia. Weber was a star. He had a spontaneous smile and a folksy, self-deprecating charm that contrasted with the seriousness of his focus and the obvious strength of his mind. The ordinary soldiers under his command seemed almost universally to adore him. Later, on a rainy night in Bosnia, a sergeant said to me, "I don't like officers, and never have. Most of them are full of shit. But Weber? I'd take a bullet for him." I asked him to explain. He may have been a little embarrassed by his declaration. He said he meant that with Weber on his side, and some good weaponry, he couldn't imagine losing a fight.

But there was a more complex connection now, in the absence of war, and it had less to do with Weber's battlefield skills than with his personality. When he asked his soldiers about their families, he seemed to care. He often remembered previous conversations; apparently he had an easy time attaching lives to all those faces. On the day of departure, in the Fort Stewart gym, he moved through the crowd seeking contact, lingering, and enjoying the company of the troops. Banter came easily to him—about baseball, basketball, deer hunting, Army paperwork, the glories of Texas, and the misery of just about everywhere else. Oklahoma deserved particular scorn, because of the University of Oklahoma's football rivalry with his alma mater, Texas A&M. He liked to pretend that being an A&M "Aggie" was the most important thing in his life. In his light Texas drawl he liked to say, "Now, I'm just a *simple* guy . . ." though everyone could see that he was not.

The division's chaplain came to the front of the gym and said a thirty-second prayer. There was a bit of saluting, and the troops began to file out. On the far side of the parking lot the band struck up a rendition of "God Bless the U.S.A.," which in the context felt a little forced. It was another hot morning in Georgia. There was no fuss. The soldiers climbed onto the buses and sat down. The buses would take them on the short ride north to Fort Stewart's Hunter Army Airfield, in Savannah, where they would wait for their flight, the first of two that would carry them not to war but to Eagle Base. It was true that they would be away for six months, and that for many with families the separation would be difficult. Dissatisfaction with the frequency of such separations—as much for field training in the United States as for deployments overseas—has become a serious cause of attrition among the Army's troops, more than half of whom are married. Nonetheless, I noticed that by the time they got on the buses, these soldiers seemed to have come to terms with the idea of departure, and they did not look particularly glum.

I wandered over to Weber just as a young captain reported to him that the buses were about to pull out. Weber acknowledged the report with a discernibly ironic use of the brigade's motto: "Send me!" The captain flashed a grin and disappeared. Weber had a family of his own to leave—

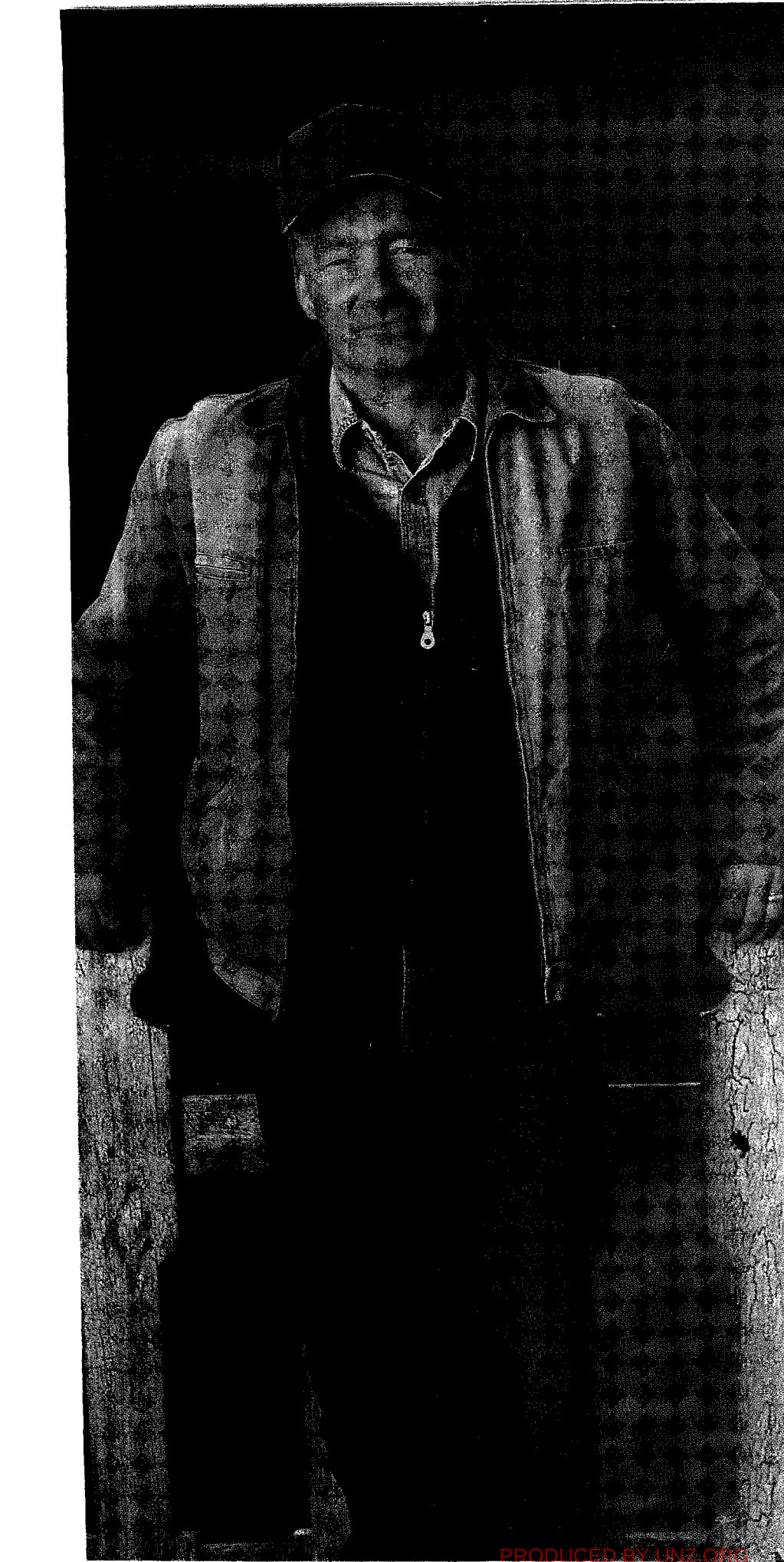
WINTER BALE

Not a scent so much as a bouquet
of smells, that stable: old wood, horseflesh,
the sweet round buds of manure;
molasses, oats, leather, hay.

In the ancient bushel basket a nest
of twine, now the red taut plunk of it cut
from the bale, as puffed up
out of the flakes comes dust

from the fields a year before,
and a stiff, sleepy bull snake oozes
across the cold floor and into the stall
where the edgy stallion waits for hay.

—ROBERT WRICLEY



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a graceful, energetic wife who was an officer in the Army Reserve, and two young children for whom six months would seem like an eternity. I suggested to him that he might want to change the brigade's motto. He smiled ruefully and said he'd thought of that too.

A GIANT DEPLOYMENT MACHINE

It wouldn't have done any good anyway, because beyond its routine duties of hosting the 3rd ID, sending off the forces is what Fort Stewart is all about. Its operators advertise it as "the Army's premier power projection platform." It has vast warehouses full of ready-to-ship supplies; a new and highly mechanized container yard with a brigade's worth of 530 containers and 250 chassis; a huge new twenty-four-hour rail marshaling yard for loading wheeled and tracked vehicles; an elaborate ammunition dump and loading point; a refurbished railroad with seventeen miles of track, three locomotives, and 200 cars; a military airport with all the requisite facilities; and special access to the loading docks at the nearby deepwater ports of Savannah and Jacksonville. It can tap the labor of thousands of people, both military and civilian, to make the send-offs work—to ship out, if required, the entire 3rd ID with all its tanks and equipment to anywhere in the world. It cannot guarantee that the staging areas on the receiving end can *absorb* such deliveries, since few places have facilities to match its own, but that's part of the larger problem of asymmetry, the Goliath syndrome that besets the U.S. military in general, and it has not diminished the garrison's purpose or design.

The principal destinations for troops deploying from Fort Stewart this year alone include Bosnia, Kosovo, Egypt, Kuwait, and the Army training grounds in Louisiana and California—and all but the Middle East assignments involve multiple rotations. The garrison is almost constantly sending the various units out or bringing them back at the end of their tours. The efforts are coordinated by a grandly named Deployment Control Headquarters, which turns out to be a young major and a couple of sergeants toiling behind old desks to keep the many schedules from colliding.

The process of deployment is opaque even for the participants. Most of the necessary preparations are done at the level of individual companies and platoons, as small parts of a complex, interwoven process that appears to be half magical every time it comes together. Managing that process is a mind-boggling exercise in details. Colonel William Betson, the commander of Fort Stewart's garrison, mentioned, for instance, the difficulty he had in getting the deployment trains to run on time. He was plagued not by hurricanes or wars but by stupid little things like the tools required to chain down the loads. He said, "Invariably, someone will forget a widget." And there are plenty of widgets to forget, because there is so much equipment to chain down. Combat units drag along a lot of supplies, and they also consist of a lot of people, each, of course, with an

independent mind. Consider the joy of departing on a family vacation, and take it to the *n*th power.

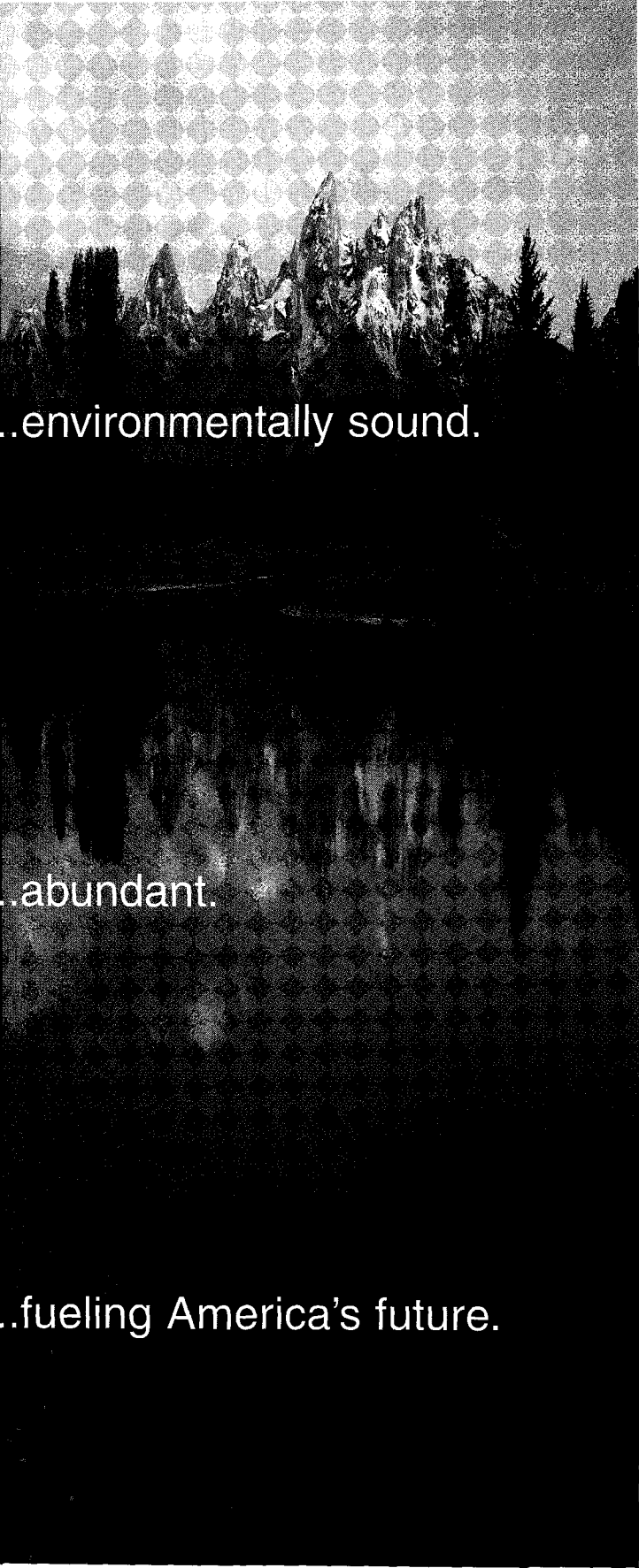
There are reformers today, as there usually have been, who believe that tomorrow's Army can be light and quick, but if they are pragmatic, they define those words in relative terms; a new, pared-down armored vehicle, for instance, with wheels instead of tracks, might weigh merely thirty tons as compared to the current thirty-five. The truth is that the Army is incapable of doing anything lightly, and it suffers from heaviness even in the process by which it tries to slim down. Though it is smarter than people believe, and it is surprisingly self-aware, it has been tied to its massiveness as surely as to its war-fighting conventions.

In any case, Fort Stewart has to deal with the heaviness of the equipment it is given. For example, when the Pentagon calls for companies of M1-A1 tanks from the 3rd ID, and diverts a ship to Savannah to pick them up, the issue arises of how to get the tanks from the motor pools to the port. Ignoring the need to arrange for all the other vehicles, fuel, and supplies that have to accompany such a deployment, the job might not in itself seem difficult to accomplish, since tanks by definition are mobile. The port lies just forty miles north, up Interstate 95 and across a familiar corner of the city, and the \$1.6 million M1-A1s—each powered by a 1,500-horsepower turbine, and capable of doing perhaps 60 mph—are by design perfectly able to get there on their own.

But, of course, that's not how it works, because the tanks' enormous tracks, though cushioned by rubber pads, would bust up the Georgia public roads to an extent that could be justified only by the sudden outbreak of war. Trucking the tanks to the port is similarly impractical: each tank weighs 140,000 pounds combat-loaded; combined with the 90,000 pounds of a tank-hauling truck, that amounts to a total highway load of 230,000 pounds—80,000 pounds heavier than the maximum highway load allowed by the State of Georgia under a special we're-doing-you-a-favor waiver for military shipments. In other words, forget it.

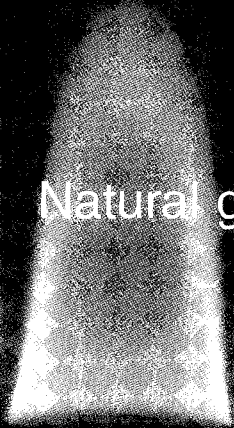
The only answer is the train. The tanks emerge from the motor pools and rumble in columns along the post's reinforced roads, eventually arriving at the marshaling yard, where, presumably, the employees of the Fort Stewart railroad have already assembled strings of flatcars on the two dedicated rail spurs that run between elevated concrete loading docks. The marshaling yard is surrounded by a chain-link fence. It contains a small building staffed by civilians, chief among them the garrison's unit-movement coordinator, Rita Johanson, graying after twenty years on the job, without whose ceaseless efforts, it is said, Fort Stewart's deployments would grind to a halt.

When tanks arrive to be shipped off, they creep docilely along the marshaling-yard fence and stop at the gate, with their turbines and hydraulics screaming and their heavily garbed crews looking down from the open hatches. Working with clipboards and long lists on a folding table, the gate-



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keepers send soldiers forward to slap adhesive bar-coded shipping labels on the armored flanks, as if even packages like these might get lost. The gatekeepers then allow the tanks to continue cautiously into a paved fifteen-acre staging area one at a time, each preceded by a "ground guide"—a single trusting soldier walking ahead with his back turned to the machine behind him. In the staging area the tanks get in line and then shut down and wait—often for hours. When its turn comes, each tank starts up again and, blowing a hurricane of hot exhaust, rolls slowly toward the tail of the train. The loading is tricky. It proceeds circus-style, with the tanks moving up the string in a single file from the last flatcar forward, or in a similar way after a pivoting turn from two side-entry points farther up the train. The tanks easily bridge the gaps between the flatcars, without resorting to ramps. But because the inside span of the tank tracks is only a few inches narrower than the flatcars are wide, steering is critical—a matter of suspending the outside of the tracks six inches over the edge on either side. This is managed with hand signals from ground guides, who now turn around to face their tanks and, having climbed onto the flatcars, must walk backward without tripping on chains and shackles or falling off the ends. I heard an old sergeant named Willie Landers say to a squad, "If that happens, you becomes the *meat* in the irronn sandwich." You can still find people who sing like that in the Army, but not many. Most will just tell you flatly to watch your ass, and drive on. There is an ambulance standing by. Willie Landers said that soldiers can get hurt just by *looking* at these machines.

The process is unavoidably linear. It takes ten hours to load, secure, and inspect a full string of fifty tanks, assuming that the chaining crew is competent and that everything goes right, which it never does. The tankers have an acute appreciation for their equipment's weight; they say that no matter how carefully they've checked a tank before leaving the motor pool, it can break down during the delay in the staging area, because the M1-A1 is so heavy that it crushes itself by standing still. Unfortunately, it also seems to crush itself by moving. In the worst case, the breakdown occurs while the tank is proceeding up the train, with a line of other tanks on the roll behind it. Then it's Murphy's Law on the scale of the U.S. Army. If the assembled mechanics can't quickly get the tank running, it has to be gotten out of the way. Since the route forward is typically blocked by other tanks that have been chained down, there are only two solutions available. The first is to back an entire line of M1-A1s off the train (a procedure requiring two ground guides for each tank—one behind who signals to one in front who signals to the driver, who can see only forward) in order finally to tow the culprit backward down the emptied flatcars. The second solution is to clear the loading docks and come in from the side with a heavy recovery crane, built onto a tank chassis, which can be maneuvered to pluck the offending machine directly from the train. The decision between them is made according to relative degrees of a big delay.

When the train finally rolls, its speed is restricted to 10 mph at Fort Stewart. If it leaves during the morning rush hour, it causes traffic jams at the road crossings—after which the garrison phones light up with complaints from soldiers made late for work. They might be more forgiving in times of war, but this is peace. Fifteen miles to the east the CSX railroad takes over and hurries the train to the port, as much to clear it off the commercial rails as to provide the Army with good service. At the port the soldiers occupy a modest patch of pavement and try to stay out of the way. The port is extremely busy, with its mountains of commercial containers and its aggressive, superefficient longshoremen who don't appreciate the Army's presence, with its slow-walking ground guides and its oddly shaped, overweight, bulletproof equipment.

4,000 SOLDIERS, A MILLION DETAILS

When the 3rd ID got the final word, in the spring of 2000, that it was headed for Bosnia in the fall, it began immediately to prepare. The framework for the deployment was clear. Bosnia was to be a plug-in mission, with well-established camps maintained by Brown & Root and supported logistically by the military's European Command, in Heidelberg, Germany. The Bosnia operation already had its own pool of tanks and Bradley armored personnel carriers, its own trucks, vans, buses, and utility vehicles, and its own fleet of armored Humvees. The division would have to ship over some helicopters, which are not normally shared within the Army, but by the standards of Fort Stewart this would be a light deployment. That did not mean it was simple.

Within the framework of the mission the individual units decided what they would need to bring along. Since the soldiers were not carrying packs on their backs, the unit commanders tended to make sure they wouldn't get caught short before considering what they could perhaps live without. This is, of course, exactly the wrong way to plan for a family vacation, but it is what Rita Johanson and the other transportation experts were used to. After several months of preparation Johanson and a team flew in June to Eagle Base for a two-day "flow conference," during which they appraised the facilities for their capacity to handle the upcoming population surge that would be imposed by the inflow of Bill Weber's Second Brigade during the two-week "relief in place," an apprenticeship period during which the outgoing troops would teach the replacements the essentials of their appointed rounds. Johanson saw nothing of Bosnia beyond the base. Her strongest personal impression was of the lack of privacy in the women's shower room, about which she could laugh. She returned directly to Fort Stewart, and by midsummer she had secured space on a ship for the bulk of the supplies, had wrangled up enough Air Force cargo planes for the light equipment, and had arranged for a staggered sequence of twenty-five wide-



Central Issue Facility, Fort Stewart

bodied charter flights timed to deliver the troops to Eagle Base at a moderate rate that wouldn't overwhelm the airport, the mess halls, or the barracks.

The supplies were moved by truck convoys to the Port of Savannah. A hundred soldiers also moved there for a week to handle the final packing. When assembled at the port, the main load included 175 military containers (at an average weight of 25,000 pounds each); thirty-eight shrink-wrapped helicopters (with detached rotors); a handful of extra trucks, trailers, and Humvees; and an additional 305 miscellaneous items too big to containerize. If that seems like a lot, consider that in 1999, when the 3rd ID returned from a training exercise in Egypt, along with its expected load it found itself with 100 containers that didn't even belong to it, including a half dozen or so packed with putrid steaks. In any case, the ship that now came in for the Bosnia mission made even the docks of Savannah look small: it was an Italian roll-on roll-off vessel, an 800-foot beauty, and within two days it had swallowed the supplies into a portion of its hold. On August 23, with a few soldiers aboard to watch over the equipment, it slipped down the Savannah River beyond the city, past wild coastal marshes where from a distance a few fishermen might have seen the immense superstructure sliding by above the reeds, and then on beyond the old Confederate fort at Tybee Island

and into the open ocean. Two weeks later, in early September, the ship docked in the port of Rijeka, on the Croatian coast, where it disgorged the supplies, which were loaded again onto trains and taken on a long ride east and south into Bosnia, to a supply depot at a railhead near Tuzla. By then the rest of the deployment was getting under way. The Air Force had encountered some problems with its cargo planes, particularly the C-141s, which kept breaking down and diverting to Fort Dix, New Jersey. But the commercial charter flights had started off well and were moving the troops on schedule.

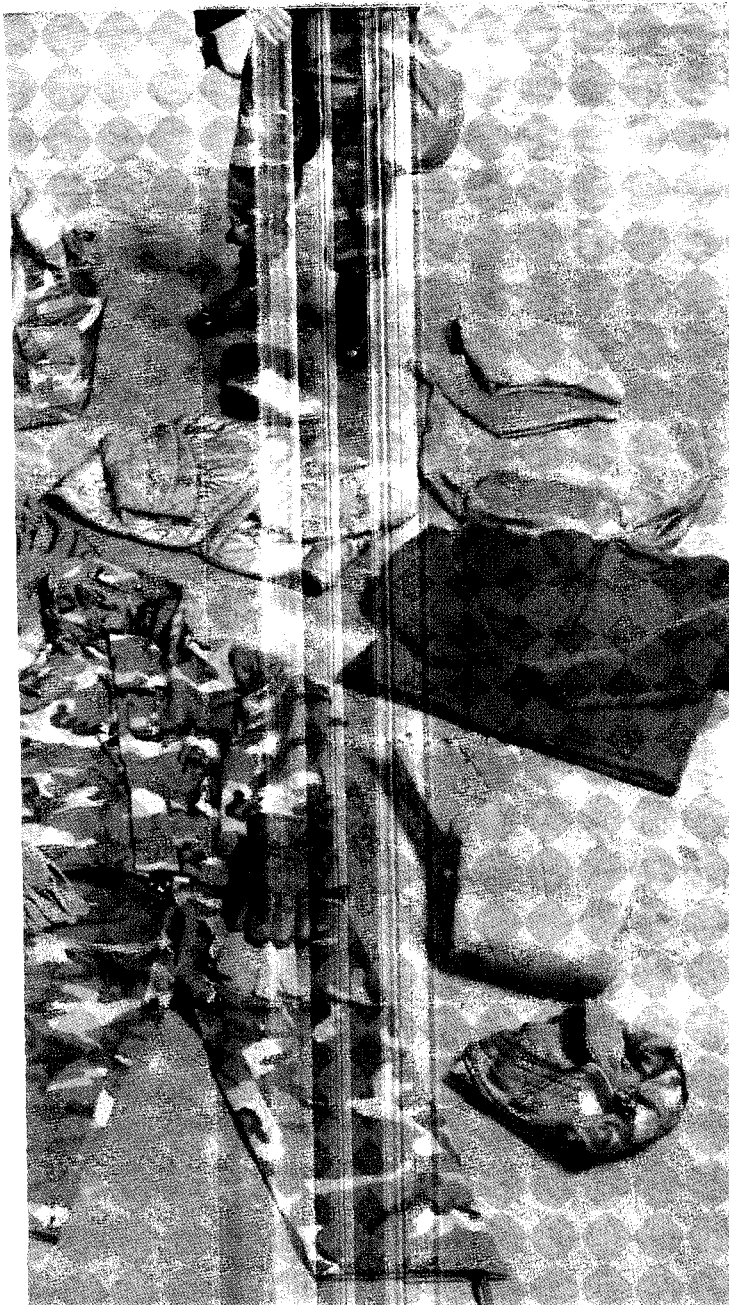
For the deploying units themselves a parallel process of internal preparations had largely come to an end. At the most basic level that process involved the preparation of each individual soldier and the verification of a bewildering array of details. Take as a starting point just the problem of a soldier's clothing. Troops arrive at Fort Stewart equipped with nothing more than their field uniforms, which they are expected to buy with money from a clothing allowance. Beyond that it is up to the garrison to provide them with a full complement of gear. This is done in a dim wooden warehouse called the Central Issue Facility, staffed by longtime civilian employees (sometimes third generation) who speak with the accents of deepest Georgia and move slowly in the heat. The civilians stand at stations in a central stocking area,



behind a long wooden countertop. The soldiers shuffle from station to station, pushing battered shopping carts, which they stuff with equipment on the basis of computer-generated menus specific to one of thirty-five specialties—mounted infantry, dismounted infantry, tanker, aviator, cook, and so on. The goods they receive remain the property of the government, and have to be inventoried and signed for at the end of the counter. At the minimum they include, in order of the stations, two cloth barracks bags, two waterproof bags, one extender belt, one equipment belt, two wool blankets, two plastic canteens, one entrenching-tool holster, one first-aid case, two canteen covers, one canteen cup, one pair of leather gloves, one Kevlar helmet (with separate chinstrap, sweatband, and liner), one entrenching tool, one sleeping mat, one shelter half, one duffel bag, one modular sleeping bag, one Core-Tex sleeping-bag cover, one mosquito net, one camouflaged field pack, one shoulder strap (left), one

shoulder strap (left), one tactical-load-bearing vest, one poncho, one helmet cover, one black beret, one parka liner, one pair of vinyl overshoes, one light undershirt, one rain parka, one pair of rain pants, one wool sweater, one cold-weather cap, one (chemical) protective suit, one pair of (chemical) protective gloves, one flak vest, one Gore-Tex parka, one pair of Gore-Tex overpants, two sets of polypropylene long underwear, one pair of glove shells, two pairs of glove inserts, one neck gaiter, two heavy-pile undershirts, and one balaclava. Later, elsewhere, the soldiers receive their weapons and gas masks. But here already, at the end of the countertop, the shopping carts overflow with around \$2,000 worth of stuff per soldier, some of which later gets lost and almost all of which eventually wears out.

Which returns us to the realities of the Bosnia deployment. For each soldier heading overseas the equipment



ment had to be selected at, in and the inevitable gaps filled in. This meant going back to the Central Issue Facility and negotiating with the staff there, particularly with a civilian supervisor named Mr. Nelson, who in defense of the division's supplies had long ago adopted the role of a sheriff. One of his co-workers said to me, "Mr. Nelson, he's the bad guy down here. The soldiers, they're always moaning and crying and pleading, you know, *Please, Mr. Nelson! I need that!* Or when stuff is missing, *You didn't give it to me two years ago!*" And Mr. Nelson is supposed to say, "Oh, I remember *you!* Sure, I'll just mark it off in my property book!" In practice Mr. Nelson could sometimes be persuaded to do just that, but it took time. And then once the deploying soldiers had accounted for their basic issue, they had to go next door, to a separate warehouse, to collect a special "Bosnia issue" of at least thirteen additional items, including a fiberglass mine probe, a second duffel, and

"intermediate cold weather boots," which tended to run a half-size small and had to be tried on.

All such details were spelled out in a set of formal "soldier readiness checks," which covered hundreds of items and had to be completed for each man or woman heading overseas. Beyond the clothing, soldier readiness involved personnel and pay arrangements, wills, financial papers, contact numbers, family housing, storage, physical-fitness standards, ID cards, dog tags (two, around neck), Geneva Convention cards, small-weapons qualifications, and a variety of medical issues, including hearing aids, prescriptions, eyeglasses, pregnancy tests, inoculations, blood and urine tests, HIV tests, and "dental readiness checks." (Another large set of must-dos was associated with "family-readiness groups," unit-based self-help groups created by the Army in response to family morale problems.) It helped that the regular-Army soldiers were already supposed to be deployable, and that they went through similar checks as part of the standard unit procedures, but many of them had to be checked again now, with this specific departure in mind. The burden imposed by the use of National Guard troops was higher still. For example, among the two companies mobilized for the initial Bosnia rotation, more than a fifth of the soldiers had to have the wax cleaned out of their ears before they could have their hearing tested (turning a fifteen-minute check into an all-morning delay), and large numbers of them were found upon arrival at the dentist's office to have nondeployable teeth.

I heard about those teeth from many of the top officers in the 3rd ID, perhaps because the second Bosnia rotation was going to include a majority from the National Guard. There is no doubt that fixing their teeth would be a good thing to do. Still, up close one begins to wonder about the way the Army judges its ability to send its troops overseas—whether to perform peacekeeping or to fight wars. Much of that information remains classified, and goes far beyond the soldier-readiness checks. But it is obvious that elements of unreality have crept into play, and that in a sustained fight the present standards would have to change. At the same time, it would be unrealistic to expect the changes to take place now, in a context of peace. And in such a context dental readiness becomes a big deal if for no other reason than that toothaches are a real sort of pain.

Bosnia is a similar thing. The Balkans deployment became an obsession for the entire 3rd ID, and given the relatively small number of troops heading out on it, the reaction was unusual. Indeed, the Balkans mission turned out to be the most disruptive event in the 3rd ID's recent history—and the only mission that had ever caused it to question its ability to fight wars. If this seems difficult to believe, consider that however serious the intent, every other mission in most soldiers' memories had been a simulation or a game—and that even the Gulf War had turned out to be, as one of the veterans said to me, hardly more than a training exercise with conse-

quences. Since the war the 3rd ID had been in the United States preparing, for the most part, to fight an enemy that did not quite exist, a necessary but fictitious opposing force created by the Army itself. Then came the mission to Bosnia, which was low-grade by military standards, but for the first time in years also something real. In that light alone the focus on it by the division's career officers became understandable. They were professional soldiers being called on to do a job, and every one I met seemed to care about doing it right. At the same time, they were hardly looking forward to the assignment: it was to be a police action on foreign soil, with no victories to win and no objective in sight beyond an uncertain peace (a "safe and secure environment") in which the imported ideal of a democratic multi-ethnic state was somehow supposed to take root. To add to the officers' concerns, although some of them had already served in the Balkans with other divisions, this would be the first peacekeeping effort for the 3rd ID, and it would require all of the subtlety, patience, and personal wariness that operating in international coalitions and ambiguous civilian environments entails. Somehow this would have to be communicated to even the simplest soldier carrying a gun.

There was another issue, too. Having watched the political reaction to recent problems during the Kosovo peacekeeping mission, when a chain of command was punished after a few soldiers beat some civilians and one raped and murdered an Albanian girl, commanders at every level of the division were convinced that there would be little tolerance for mistakes made on the ground in Bosnia. Despite occasional assurances from the Pentagon and Congress, if for any reason something did go wrong in Bosnia, a U.S. soldier or a Bosnian civilian getting killed, the political system would again require the reflexive sacrifice of hard-won careers. The resulting defensiveness goes a long way toward explaining the 3rd ID's disproportionate reaction to the Bosnian mission, and it was typical for the officer corps today—a form of the career fear that permeates the ranks and pervades almost all Army operations.

Colonel Betson, the Fort Stewart garrison commander, brought up the Kosovo incident with me in order to explain the scope of the training for Bosnia. He said, "I don't know what the issue was there, but I *do* know that we work very hard to train our soldiers *here* before we send them anywhere. They have to go through individual training, platoon training, and company training, and it's all set before they leave. We do our best to make sure we don't put a young kid into a situation he's not mature enough to handle." What he didn't mention is that the troops in Kosovo had gone through similar training, and that in its investigation the Army, before wrecking the careers of the chain of commanders, had seized on the fact that the troops had missed a final mission-rehearsal exercise—as if that would have made a difference.

So when the orders came down for Bosnia, the 3rd ID knew immediately not only that it needed to train for the

mission but also that it needed to establish a clear record of having done so. Moreover, the structure and much of the content of the training had been defined by higher authorities in the Army, and the established training regimens were large to start with. So simple organizational dynamics were also at play: the division could add to the training that had been done in the past but not easily subtract. If the thinkers at the division's headquarters could have examined the peacekeeping mission as an isolated problem, ignoring Army mandates and the politics of recrimination, they might have come up with a quieter, less burdensome response. Other nations certainly have. But in the United States in peacetime, when it came to preparing for Bosnia, proportionality was never much of a choice.

A MISPLACED PATCH OF BOSNIA

The purpose of the training was to accustom soldiers to working in a potentially hostile but civilian environment. It began with a one-week course of "individual replacement training," divided evenly between the classroom and the field and designed to provide a basic orientation to Bosnia from a standardized Army point of view. Out of curiosity I went through it myself, across the state from Fort Stewart at Fort Benning, with a group of stragglers who had not been present at the initial training. The week started inauspiciously with a driver's-ed class oriented toward Germany, which offered such helpful advice as "You must be 100 percent alert at all times" and the equally useful "When driving on the autobahn, if you take the wrong exit, backing up is prohibited and can be dangerous." But things then improved somewhat, with classroom instruction on such wide-ranging topics as gas masks, espionage, venereal disease, Bosnian history, convoy operations, the laws of land warfare, the general rules of engagement, fratricide, and terrorism—about which the advice was "Never underestimate the threat." A lot of this was taught Army-style—for instance, one instructor would frequently bellow, "Are we trackin'?" and soldiers would answer raggedly, "Trackin' like a VCR!"

The class was divided into squads. As the course progressed, they moved outside to the remote training grounds of Fort Benning, for weapons qualification on the M-16 or the standard 9mm pistol, and for practice in a variety of skills that the Army believed should constitute basic knowledge for every soldier in Bosnia: how to search a car, search a man, search a woman, walk a booby-trapped trail, evacuate a wounded soldier, recognize incoming mortar rounds, react as a squad to sniper fire, probe backward out of a minefield, and conduct an interview with CNN. During most of these exercises the soldiers wore full battle dress and carried heavy toy M-16s known as "rubber ducks"—which, unlike the real weapons, could not clog up during the frequent rolls in the red Georgia dirt.

On the last day the squads walked on patrol through the pine woods, down training "lanes" that had been rigged

with surprise events, including an encounter with genuine civilians, hired from outside to play the role of refugees. The squad I was with encountered the refugees about a half mile into the course, and we dropped into protective crouches, holding our rubber ducks at the ready. The refugees were three impoverished-looking women wearing ragged dresses and shawls, one with a plastic baby swaddled in a blanket; they had an encampment nearby with a tea kettle on a fire in front of an old tent. They started making gestures toward their mouths and crying, “MRE! MRE! MRE!” (for rations, or “meals ready to eat”) and “GI! GI!” The squad leader, a sergeant, was negotiating with them politely through his “interpreter,” explaining that he had no food to give away, when suddenly one of our squad members, a big loud man who had joked earlier about shooting women and children, declared an alert. He shouted, “Watch out for that baby! I don’t think it’s a baby! Yellow! Yellow! Yellow!” and then “Red! Red! Red!” with which the entire squad had to go rolling again in the dirt. The other squad members were really annoyed with him afterward, and they let him know it: he was taking the game too far. But it’s not surprising that he was on edge. Over the past hour alone we had been attacked by a sniper, had thrown smoke grenades and retreated, had

store where soldiers could buy soft drinks and candy bars, a nice new graveyard, assorted other structures, and—my favorite—a clinic labeled MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES, where eventually an Army medic got to play the role of a hostile French doctor pretending not to speak English. Adding to the authenticity, the artillery units hauled in thirty junked cars and scattered them around, going so far as to leave some beside the public roads that cut across the base—until the state highway department (them again) objected, forcing the instructors to emerge into Georgia and drag the wrecks out of sight, deeper into their new little world.

This was to be a war game unlike any other, with no territory to conquer and no enemy to fight. The division signed on forty “observer-controllers”—experienced soldiers, many of whom had served in Bosnia or Kosovo, whose duty now would be to monitor the platoons and at the end of each day to lead the highly participatory discussions known as after-action reviews. To populate the training ground, the instructors recruited 330 ordinary soldiers from throughout the 3rd ID and assigned them roles as Bosnians—a few played policemen, military officers, and city officials, and a lot played civilians. They called these people COBs, for “civilians on the battlefield”—a strange choice of words,

EACH SOLDIER SENT OVERSEAS MUST BE BRIEFED, TRAINED, EQUIPPED, AND CLOTHED. HE MUST HAVE HIS EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTED, THE HEAVY STUFF BY SHIP; MUST BE “LIFTED” TO HIS DESTINATION; AND MUST BE FED AND SUPPLIED FOR THE DURATION OF THE MISSION.

advanced again and been mortared, and, while detouring around a roadblock, had lost our medic to a booby trap when he stepped off the trail. After one week in individual replacement training the message from the Army was that Bosnia at any moment could hurt you.

To the credit of the 3rd ID, that message was tempered at the higher levels of training. The divisional artillery was asked to put aside its guns and set up the platoon- and company-level exercises, a huge task that by the late spring of 2000 had led to a complete “Bosnian” overlay of Fort Stewart, including an American patrol camp at the northwest corner of the base, where the soldiers would stay and mount guard during the training, and a network of designated roads and villages where they would run their practice patrols on foot and in Humvees.

The most active villages were fully dedicated training sites in the remote reaches of the Fort Stewart woods, some consisting of plywood shacks constructed especially for this job, and one in particular—a pre-existing urban-warfare site of cinder-block structures—that seemed as well built as some of the surviving hamlets in the war-ravaged regions of Bosnia. They called it Lopare, and hung it with Cyrillic signs. It had a two-story municipal building with a phone and a steel desk, an Orthodox church with a little steeple, a school serving as a weapons-storage site, a semi-functional café and

given that the training was supposed to convince the troops of exactly the opposite: that Bosnia was *not* a battlefield. The instructors also referred to the daily schedule as “the battle rhythm” and to themselves, on the radio, as the “battle kings.” But so what? Most people seemed to understand the essence of the training anyway. One of the officers said to me, “What we try to teach people is how to think, as opposed to what to think. Because you just can’t. It’s too complex. And that’s the nature of the operational environment our Army is engaged in all over the world.” He meant the environment for what the military now calls OOTW, or “operations other than war.”

When the Fort Stewart role players took the job, they knew it would keep them away from their normal duties for more than a year, through preparations for both Bosnia rotations, and then again for Kosovo. At the start they attended a three-day “COB Academy,” where they were given a smattering of Bosnian politics and had their roles defined. The key players were assigned names and biographies, and told to immerse themselves in their new allegiances and beliefs. The rest of them were asked to act as undisciplined civilians would—behavior that required no special instruction.

The first platoons started cycling through the week-long sessions in late April. The soldiers were presented with typical peacekeeping problems—negotiating with a mayor or



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Crowd-control drill, Hinesville, Georgia

inspecting a weapons-storage site or protecting a group of refugees returning home—which then were allowed to play out. The idea was to avoid the scripting that afflicts much infantry training and to let the story lines develop in unexpected ways, as they might in a civilian setting. Throughout the months that followed the instructors struggled against their own tendency to fill gaps with action and watched carefully for a related syndrome among the “civilians” that they called “COB creep.” Usually they succeeded in keeping the scenarios within reason.

Every week was like a new soap opera: the characters all knew each other, and acted accordingly. If, for instance, a squad of soldiers tried to bully the officials in one village, striding into the mayor’s office and making demands, “Bosnians” in all the other villages soon heard about it, and gave all the soldiers a hard time for the duration of the training session. A major named Jack Pritchard, who was directing the show day to day, told me that he was trying to teach levels of non-intervention. The trick for getting through the course, as the soldiers soon began telling one another, was largely just to stay calm. Some of them took it too far and became downright saintly. But tempers sometimes did flare, and with shouting matches built into the proceedings, real fights occasionally broke out between soldiers and civilians. I saw a few of them myself during some of the later training. The ob-

server-controllers would step in and diffuse the tension, but then they would step back out and let the stories continue.

During the first training rotation the worst case occurred when a “demonstrator” threw an apple. A soldier, thinking the apple was a grenade, raised his M-16 (loaded with blanks) and fired. The demonstrator was a quick thinker—he fell down and died. The soldier was a little slower—he never could explain what he had hoped to achieve by shooting the man once the apple had been thrown. The trainers decided to let it run, and the entire company had trouble getting the civilians to cooperate for the rest of the week. During the second rotation the worst case became known as the Massacre on Lane Four. A National Guard lieutenant lost his temper and began to shoot civilians, and when his soldiers tried to stop him, he shot them too. The observer-controller who intervened told me about it quietly soon afterward. He was worried because he had found no formal way to isolate or identify the man, given that the lieutenant had apologized during the self-critique segment of the after-action review, and that an inviolable part of this training is the freedom to make errors. Nonetheless, it’s hard to imagine that the lieutenant wasn’t quietly offered a desk job.

The Fort Stewart exercises for the first Bosnian rotation wrapped up halfway through July. In the “capstone” event, which was repeated several times, a sequence of companies

went into downtown Hinesville during a simulated Bosnian election, protected a group of “Muslims,” and confronted an unruly mob. Each time the town went about its normal business—which, frankly, isn’t much. Cars drove by, and those people who didn’t already know asked what was going on. One man asked if martial law had been declared—as if there might have been a coup d’état. The spectacle made the evening news in Savannah at least once. Several days after the last of the exercises the soldiers flew to the training center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, for a final full-scale mission rehearsal, which was more of the same. A month afterward they flew overseas.

I watched as the last group of 280 soldiers, bused in from the Fort Stewart gym, stood around in their combat gear inside a cavernous departure hall at Hunter Army Airfield. Rita Johanson was on the job with her clipboards and lists and her staff of twenty “movement control specialists,” otherwise known as “pushers.” She predicted a departure on time. An Omni Air DC-10 stood outside on the tarmac, swallowing hundreds of green duffels into its hold. Colonel Bill Weber walked around checking up on his people. General Skip Sharp, who was leaving with this group, arrived by helicopter. His immediate subordinates showed up to say good-bye. The soldiers filed into a ready room, where a sergeant bellowed the required hijack briefing, which amounted to “Do not hijack the airplane, because it is against government regulations.” Sharp stood in front of his troops in his helmet and uniform, looking a little shy. He said, “Is everybody ready?” and I don’t think he was being funny. People had been telling me that it’s a new kind of Army—that you can’t just order men to take the hill anymore but have to explain why. *Kum-ba-yah*. But when I asked a soldier if he knew whether they would fly directly to Bosnia or stop first in Germany overnight, he looked at me as if I was stupid and said, “It’s like this, see: just get on the plane.” I thought, if only leaving were so easy.

THE ARMY’S REAL MORALE PROBLEM

I drove to Bosnia from Croatia in a Budget rental car, and looked around for several days before seeking out the Army. Early one evening, while exploring the quiet countryside southeast of Tuzla, I took a wrong turn and came unexpectedly upon an immense chain-link fence stretching into the twilight ahead. The fence was topped with concertina wire, harshly lit, and backed by watchtowers every few hundred yards. Inside I could see low wooden buildings and shipping containers stacked high.

The profile was unmistakable. I parked the car and strolled over to a locked gate to ask where, exactly, I was. The soldier who came down to investigate seemed surprised by my presence, but he was willing to talk through the fence. He said this was Comanche, the helicopter-and-logistics base—the one with the western theme. Eagle Base lay merely a mile

away, but he had no idea how to direct me there by the public roads. He said he himself stayed clear of it. I asked him why. He said, “Too much brass. It’s wound *way* too tight.” We continued to talk for a while. He was not enjoying Bosnia. He was surprised that it was possible to drive around in a rental car. He asked about Tuzla and said, “They don’t let us out of here—not hardly ever at all.” He looked so miserable that I felt guilty when I drove off free into the night.

The truth is that all the U.S. bases in Bosnia, including Comanche, were wound way too tight. Take as an example the rule that the soldiers carry their weapons at all times. This was presumably meant as a precaution against outside aggression, but there was no conceivable need for it, and apparently no other armies in Bosnia enforced it on their camps. Still, the Army had a very hard time loosening up. A requirement that the troops wear combat helmets while in camp had only recently been relaxed, and that was considered to be a courageous decision.

But the guard at Comanche was right that Eagle Base was the tensest of them all—a place so tight that the air itself seemed sometimes to hum with anxiety. I kept trying to understand why. One soldier blamed it on a training culture run amok. He was a sergeant in the combat engineers. He said, “We’ve gotten to the point when you go into the field, or do anything, you’ve got to have some kind of observer-controller. I don’t *need* an observer-controller to do this job here—just leave me alone.” A captain I spoke to blamed it on the information culture. He was the acting “mayor” of the base, and he had dark circles under his eyes. He said that once the systems for providing information were put into place, they demanded to be fed, which led to micromanagement, which in turn increased the hunger for information—a snowballing effect. That, he said, was why he was about to quit the Army. I suggested that the same process exists in civilian organizations, and he answered that in the Army it is harder to resist. Colonel Bill Weber grimaced when I mentioned the process to him. He knew all about it, and called it “feeding the beast.” He also pointed out that during a peace-keeping mission, with so little action on the ground, the beast just naturally went looking for scraps.

But that still didn’t fully explain the tension. Then, one night around dinnertime, a couple of kids were seen running into the woods next to an equipment yard on the base, and the perimeter guards discovered a “breach in the wire” nearby. The reaction was astonishing to observe. The entire garrison snapped to an alert: the headquarters compound was locked down, hundreds of soldiers were called out to patrol the grounds, and checkpoints were thrown up at the crossroads inside the base. The military dogs were brought out to help. Two helicopters with infrared scopes and other night-vision devices began to clatter overhead, scouring the grounds for the intruders—who would presumably draw attention to themselves by acting in some furtive way. The search went on for hours, but the intruders were never

found. I sat outside my quarters on a well-built Brown & Root deck and watched the action late into the night. The soldiers who came by seemed to be going through the motions of a search, rather than really looking. Afterward a guard I had met before came and sat with me. He said it had been known from the start that the intruders had escaped right away. Indeed, it was known who they were—the sons of a neighboring farmer—and they had broken in before. I asked him why the base had bothered with such an alert. He said, “CYA. Cover your ass. Because you’ve got no reason not to.”

That was it, of course—the key to the inner life of Eagle Base, and the explanation for its tension. It was the same sort of career fear that had shaped the response to the mission from the start. Later I discovered that these break-ins were such a regular thing that for some of the local boys they were considered an initiation. If the Army had simply patched the fence and talked to the parents, the game might have been less fun. But this way, with just a pair of wire cutters and a bit of nerve, a couple of kids could get the entire base to light up. It was like a childish form of asymmetric warfare: the Americans knew they were being toyed with but could not keep themselves from overreacting.

The operative phrase was “force protection”—the military’s way of saying “self-defense,” and without question the most significant term in the Army’s lexicon today. The term has been around for only about ten years but has taken on the weight of a sacred incantation. Its power lies in a dual evocation of safety. On the surface it signifies the physical safety of troops—and who in peacetime can argue with that? Beneath the surface it signifies the safety of people’s careers should any of those troops be wounded or killed—and in the context of American politics what else could one expect? Bill Weber was one of the rare officers willing to take it on in public. He said, “Now, I’m just a simple guy, but it doesn’t seem to me like we’re here to protect ourselves first. I always thought the *mission* was the number-one thing. But I’ll tell you what: if you as a commander take casualties for *any* reason, the *first* question that gets asked is ‘What level of force protection did you have?’” If you were a commander on Eagle Base, you could answer that you required even your clerks to carry guns, and that although the intruders who kept busting through the wire were just kids, you never let down your defenses.

The Army was perfectly capable of judging the realities of Bosnia, of accepting changes, of drawing down troop levels, of closing and consolidating bases, and, if ordered someday, of withdrawing entirely from the Balkans—but it could not ease off on itself. More than money, more than housing, more even than time away from families, it was this artificial anxiety that was responsible for the much publicized morale problems within the ranks. And the creed of force protection stood at the center of it. The creed was strongest at Eagle Base, because of the headquarters there, but it shaped life on the satellite bases, too, and spread to

encompass the patrols. Consider just the requirement that each patrol include at least two armored Humvees, each with at least four soldiers wearing heavy Kevlar helmets and carrying loaded M-16s, and also with at least one belt-fed machine gun, typically top-mounted and manned by a combat-ready warrior in goggles and full body armor. These guys would come rolling through the peaceful, vaguely Austrian-looking landscapes around Tuzla, or walking heavily armed through the equally peaceful towns, as if they had taken a wrong turn somewhere, or completely misunderstood the realities on the ground. Only along the Drina River, with its hostile population and its war-wrecked countryside, did they not look hopelessly out of place.

None of the other coalition troops went around that way—not even in the notoriously tough territory near Mostar. They lived on nearly open bases, which in many cases they were free to leave when off duty. They wore soft hats or no hats at all, mixed easily with the population, drank the local liquor, and kept their guns out of sight. It’s true that they made less attractive targets than the Americans. But it’s also true that a sniper can easily kill a man no matter what he’s wearing. If there was any risk here at all, it was that the force-protection measures were making Americans still better targets, because they were making the GIs seem afraid.

The nature of that fear was easy to misinterpret. In Macedonia, I met an expatriate American woman who had worked twenty years abroad for the United Nations and was now stationed in Pristina, Kosovo, to build a new welfare system from scratch. She was a Texan, like Weber, but had severed the connection; she spoke English with an unusually clipped international accent and not the slightest trace of a drawl. Along the way she had picked up the habit of underestimating American soldiers, whom she disdained for their provincialism and their habit of repeating jokes from late-night TV. She said they embarrassed her constantly at meetings in Pristina. We talked about force protection, and she said, Oh, God, that embarrassed her too. She called it an American fear of the world. She equated it with the fear of bacteria, and said it was as American as wrapped bread. She said it was as American as tamper-resistant packaging. I thought she was wrong. Force protection is indeed about fear, but not of the world so much as of the political climate in America, which is a climate of peace. At the coalition headquarters in Sarajevo I met a British officer who had given this some thought. Speaking of the U.S. Army, he said, “The problem is, how much does getting on with one’s life rely not so much on succeeding but on avoiding failure?”

Weber had similar thoughts. He was concerned about the soldiers’ isolation, the effect on their morale, and the slow drift toward institutional incapacitation. For the sake of the troops as well as of the mission, he wanted to do the unthinkable—to find a way to reduce the force-protection measures, to stow the weapons while in the camps, to let



Mine clearing consultation with Bosnian soldiers

the soldiers drink an occasional beer, and to allow even the patrols to stand down. Skip Sharp apparently agreed, though he was careful with what he said to me. But it was not just a matter of issuing orders or dictating the terms: standing down required a change in mind-set both above and within the Bosnia mission, and this was proving impossible to achieve. Weber kept trying anyway. He told me about meetings he had held with the patrol commanders.

"I'll say, 'I want to know what kind of conditions would have to exist for us to stand down in Bosnia.'"

"Well, it's very dangerous over here."

"Okay. Measure that."

"Silence."

"I'll say, 'All through SFOR we haven't been attacked once!'"

"Again, silence."

"Of course, it's not always like that. I'll say, 'What would happen if I pull you out of Kevlar?'"

"And most of the guys will say, 'Nothing—it would be useful.'"

"But one company commander—and now you can see us living our own propaganda—one commander says, 'I don't think it's a good idea.'"

"But why? Is there a threat?"

"No."

"Well then, why?"

"Hey, sir, this is our field uniform, and we're in the field. It's what we wear to do our job."

"But your job is peacekeeping! You're supposed to be *talking* to people!"

Some of the patrols did talk to the Bosnians. Some of the patrols did not. Some of the patrols had been restricted by their immediate commanders from doing any such thing. But Weber kept leaving Eagle Base anyway to show them what he had in mind. In the open country, with his interpreter by his side, he stopped to talk to farmers and their wives about the weather, or elections, or whatever came up. He went into stores and bought candy for the kids. He sat in cafés, ate sausages, and drank the local teas. He took off his helmet and waded into crowds at the marketplaces, like a big, confident country boy from Texas, a man with a bad haircut and an irrepressible grin, greeting the vendors and asking after their business. The soldiers he was leading followed along in quiet amusement and took off their helmets too, if only this one time. The Bosnians never knew quite what to make of Weber's affability, and could not have understood that much of it was a conversation internal to the United States—one man's reply to the dogma of force protection, and his argument for engagement and flexibility.

THE FORCE OF DIPLOMACY

But openness and affability could not always provide solutions in Bosnia—as Weber well knew. He was advocating a mental process, a way of thinking about the mission, rather than the specific style or the particular military method that would result. One of Weber's co-workers at the headquarters on Eagle Base was a State Department diplomat who was considering the very same concepts of engagement and flexibility, but taking them in a different direction—toward the idea that in certain troubled areas where ethnic hatreds were again on the rise, the Army needed to strengthen its presence and to stand more firmly than it was naturally inclined to do.

The diplomat's name was William Bach. At age fifty-seven he was a slim, blond, bookish man who had spent eleven years in Vietnam—eight during the fighting in the south and another three more recently in Hanoi. Now he was assigned to Eagle Base as the Army's political adviser. He was focused on finding the right balance between force and force protection in Bosnia. He told me that the Army was legitimately concerned about getting sucked in, and that the worry stemmed not from vague visions of "another Vietnam" but from the precise memory of the American intervention

With the encouragement of the international forces, some of the Muslims were now trying to return to their homes. The Serbs were resisting. Begic had asked for the meeting today to inform the Army of the worsening situation.

Bach and I, along with a civilian Serbo-Croatian interpreter, walked up the main street of Eagle Base and through the pedestrian gate. The café stood a short distance away, past the last of the concertina wire, the braced-steel "dragon's teeth," and the staggered concrete barricades erected against car-bomb attacks. Out beside the public road, by a bus stop, the Army had installed a sandbagged pit into which the locals were invited to surrender their grenades and land mines—which they sometimes did. Across the road stood a few restaurants and bars, forced to survive on civilian traffic while waiting for a golden future when American soldiers would at last be allowed out to spend their pay. Those places were sleeping in the morning as Bach and I walked by, and only our café was open.

The café was empty on the inside, a dim grotto with vacant tables, smoky still lifes, and lace window curtains that filtered the daylight. Begic arrived a few minutes late. He was a lanky, gaunt, clean-shaven man, wearing a double-breasted blazer and a gunmetal shirt and tie. He had

IT IS POSSIBLE TO THINK ABOUT THE 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION'S MISSION IN BOSNIA NOT JUST AS A TRIBULATION TO BE ENDURED BUT ALSO AS A USEFUL EXPERIENCE WITH THE SORT OF AMBIGUOUS MILITARY INVOLVEMENTS THAT THE U.S. WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO FACE.

in Somalia, where in October of 1993 eighteen peacekeepers had been killed. Bach never once expressed support for the original U.S. decision to intervene in Bosnia, but he believed that there could be immediate practical reasons for stiffening the Army's resolve there. He told me that the soldiers sometimes went too far in their avoidance of risk, insisting on an attitude of rigid impartiality that, rather than dampening political emotions, seemed in places to incite ethnic hardliners and encourage their obstructionism. In his quiet way he said, "The military instinctively tries to avoid conflict, whereas I and some of the other international representatives take a more robust approach. We make the point that the diplomatic solution often requires *additional* security."

On a cold, rainy morning Bach invited me along to see what his work entailed. A minority Muslim leader from the Bosnian Serb territory in the extreme east of the country, along the Drina River, had asked for a meeting in a café just outside the Eagle Base gate. The leader's name was Refik Begic. He held a mandated Muslim position in the municipal government of Bratunac, the same grim town I had visited with the Army lieutenant on his "radio show" patrol. Bratunac was known as a particularly vicious place—an ethnically cleansed Serb community that served as the base for the famously murderous attack on neighboring Srebrenica, the once Muslim enclave that fell to Serb forces in 1995.

been a teacher in Bratunac, and during the war had been captured by the Serbs and detained at his own school. He had been exchanged for Serbian prisoners, had gone off to fight for his side, and had lost part of one foot in battle. Now he walked with a limp, and his forehead bore a vertical scar. Bach sat him down, called for coffee all around, and asked Begic for news from Bratunac.

Begic lit a cigarette. He said, "Strange things have started to happen. Many incidents." He waited, frowning, for the interpreter to speak, and continued, "For instance, the failed attempt to enter Bljecevo."

"What was that?" Bach asked, as if he hadn't quite heard.

"Last week," Begic said. "When the girl lost her foot on a land mine."

Bach said, "I remember." The girl was eighteen. She was among a group of Muslim refugees attempting to return to a ruined hamlet near Bratunac.

The Bratunac that Begic went on to describe was a place dominated by Serb hardliners and defiant war criminals, where Muslim property titles were being systematically destroyed at the city hall and a new "patriotic club" of ultranationalists had risen to power within the municipal council. In the past week alone, aside from the explosion of the land mine, a Muslim woman had been assaulted on a Bratunac street, and a refugee's house had been burned to the

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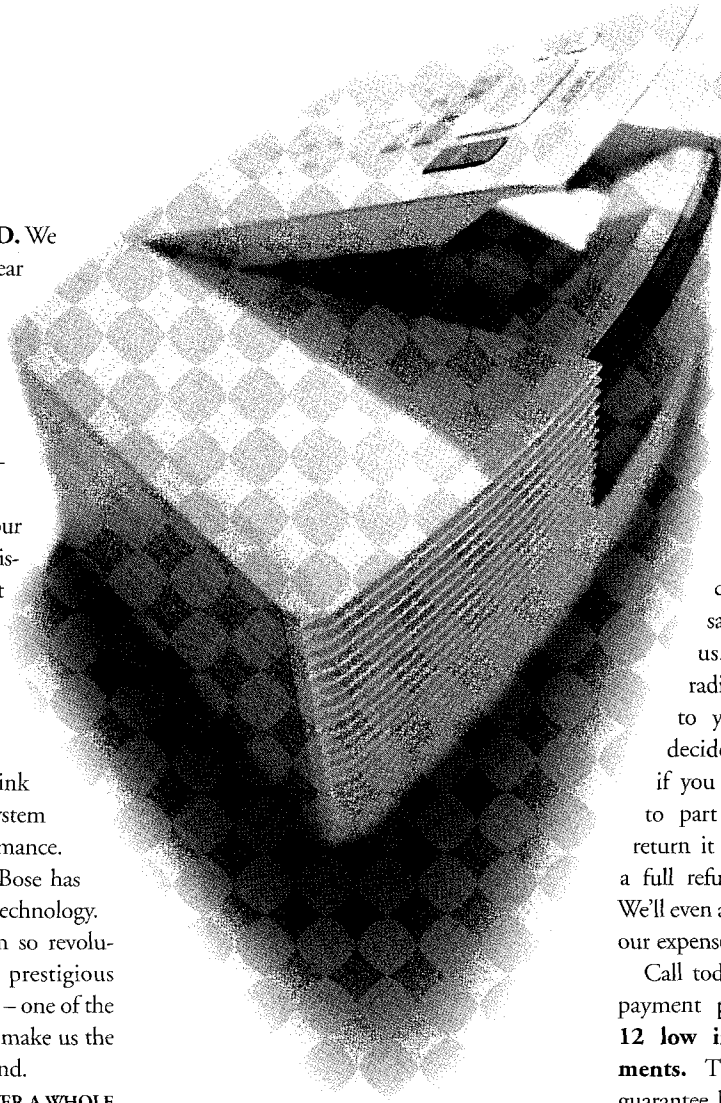
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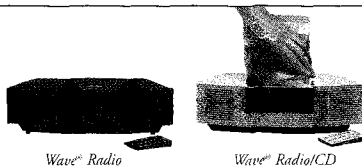
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ground. Begic wanted a strengthening of the U.S. position, and thereby a strengthening of his own.

The conversation was a dance. Bach promised nothing. He mentioned a report on suspected war criminals in Bosnia published by a human-rights organization called the International Crisis Group. In the pages devoted to Bratunac the report had named a number of local officials, including the mayor. Had Begic read the report? Were there other names that should have been in it? That was the sort of thing Bach had in mind. Begic did not have to worry about the standards of proof, because this was not a court proceeding, and the United States had no authority to arrest unindicted officials. What Bach meant was that even hearsay would be useful here—the kind of inside knowledge that would allow the Army to anticipate events on the ground. I had the feeling that Begic had not expected to go this far today. But quietly now, as if merely to help Bach with his notes, he began to name names.

After the meeting Bach expressed some nuanced doubts about the process of “returns,” the current means of re-integration of wartime refugees that has become the focus of international ambitions for Bosnia. He said that maybe someday he would express that thought at the Department of State. In the meantime, however, he just wanted to keep the Army from becoming complacent along the Drina River. American soldiers passed through Bratunac every day, and maintained a twenty-four-hour presence in Srebrenica, and they were reporting back through the regular channels that life was calm along the Drina. They said that the gunfire heard on many nights was “celebratory” (for births, weddings, and drunken get-togethers), and not meant to terrorize the Muslims. They interpreted the land mine in Bljecevo as just another remnant of war—and it was tough luck for the girl. In public many Serbs were saying these things too, though too slyly. Bach didn’t think that the soldiers overidentified with the Serbs, but he wondered if they had been lulled by the absence of battle, or were wishing the shadows away. He thought he needed to see for himself.

THE REMNANTS OF WAR

And so, two days after the meeting in the café, Bach and I strapped into the back of a Blackhawk helicopter, and with a sway and a shudder lifted off, east-bound for the Drina River. It was a bright morning made hazy by the smoke from wood-burning stoves. We cruised fast across a patchwork of small farms and scattered houses, consolidated here and there into villages with minarets, and came eventually to the land of the Bosnian Serbs, a ghost country of low hills and valleys with overgrown fields and houses that were roofless or burned or lying in rubble.

The Drina appeared ahead, a gloomy river turning loosely between close, forested hills. We flew upriver and landed at an old playing field along the short road from Bratunac to Srebrenica, where an Army Land Cruiser was

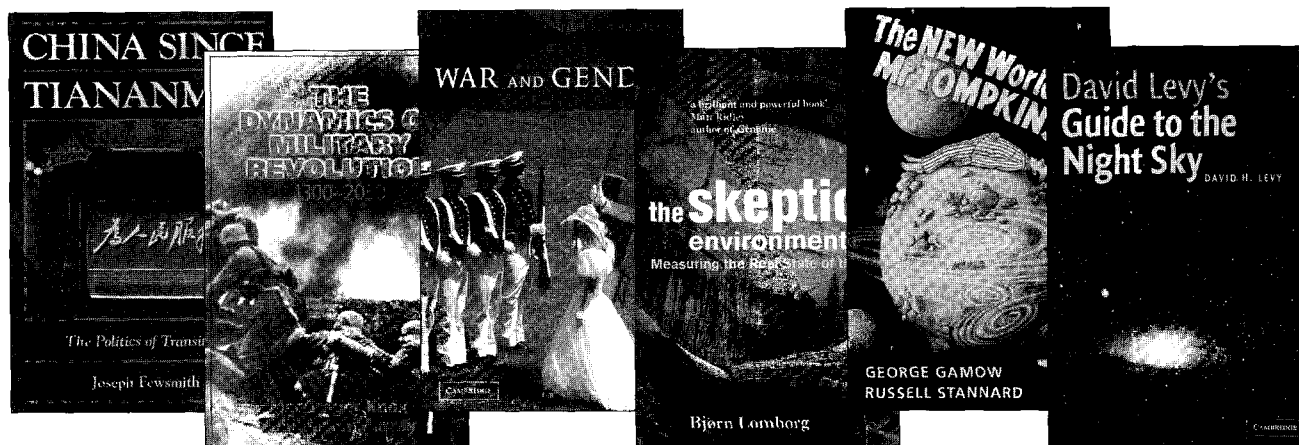
waiting for us. We were joined by a graying, bearded Englishman named Oliver Burch, a regional head of the Office of the High Representative, an agency set up to oversee the Bosnian peace. Burch had been in the country now for nearly a decade, and was said to be the toughest and most effective of the expatriates at work along the Drina River. He had been in Bljecevo when the girl lost her foot, and had been one of the first to arrive on the scene. Bach had asked him to come along today to take us back over that ground. Refik Begic had motored out from town in his rattletrap Yugo, and he led us past an abandoned battery factory, used as a collection point during the collapse of Srebrenica, and then onto a dirt road and up a narrow valley that with its gray, leafless trees resembled an Appalachian hollow on an early-winter day.

That was Bljecevo. A group of Serb refugees lived at the base of the valley in a settlement of cinder-block huts and prefabricated shelters along the road. The ruins of the Muslim houses stood farther up the valley, among steeply sloping pastures. The houses had been abandoned intact during the last hours of Srebrenica’s fall, and had been destroyed in the days afterward. Five years later young trees had taken root in the rubble, and weeds were growing on the broken stumps of the walls. It was to reclaim those remains that a group of the original inhabitants, a busload in all, had tried the week before to come home. The attempt had lasted only a few hours, including the time it took to retreat after the detonation of the mine. The returnees later insisted that they would not give up. But they had been badly frightened, and were nowhere to be seen today.

The dangers in Bljecevo remained unclear. The old front lines, which snaked through the surrounding hills only about a half mile away, had been mined and rocketed by both sides during the fighting. In contrast, the valley had been a farmed and peaceful enclave right up until the end—and therefore was uncontested land of the sort that might normally have remained clean in a war. But this was Bosnia, where mines had been indiscriminately strewn about, and where perhaps a million of the devices, many unmapped, remained hidden in the ground. As is typical in a peace-keeping operation, U.S. soldiers were not directly engaged in the slow, risky work of identifying and clearing those mines, and they were supposed to confine their patrols to routes that had been “proofed,” however that could be defined. On Eagle Base the Army had set up a regional Mine Action Center, an office charged with working through the confusion on such matters; but all it could report with certainty about the Bljecevo valley was that it contained no *known* minefields. The regular U.S. patrols had understood that as a warning and had stayed clear. Oliver Burch mentioned that the local Serbs seemed unafraid to graze their sheep in the pastures, but he himself remained wary.

Where the dirt road narrowed and grew rough, he suggested that we proceed on foot, and with care. Bach checked

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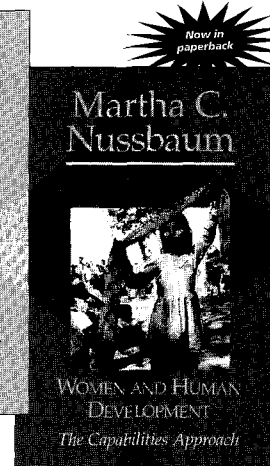
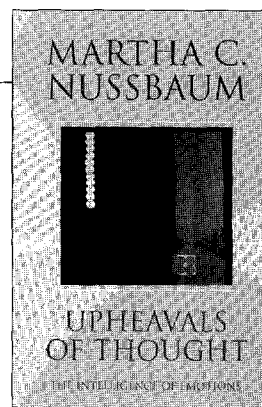
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that the crippled Begic could endure a walk, and we set off up the road, strung out along a pair of dried-mud tire tracks that offered the best assurance of safe passage. We gathered at the site where the girl had been maimed. It was a collapsed, roofless shell of a stone house much like the others, an old place built within a few feet of the road. The mine had been buried in the pathway to the ruins of the front door. It had blasted a shallow crater in the yard.

Bach studied the scene. Burch said, "Right. So what happened. The girl arrived with her family. She had a bag of sandwiches and a bottle of water. She stepped off the road, and it hit her here. It took her foot right off. She got blown clear across the road—all the way to there. When we found her, she was standing on one foot, supported by her father. Screaming, obviously." It took an hour to evacuate the girl, because of concern about other land mines.

But the concern now was the history of this particular mine. There was always the possibility that the American soldiers were right—that this was some long-dormant device, buried during the war by one side or the other and then forgotten. Burch said, "If it was not, if it was a new mine, it means we have a *serious* anti-return movement now, and that's very bad news." Before making that assumption, he wanted to explore every possibility. He suggested that perhaps the house had been mined by its Muslim owners before they fled—a trick he called a tradition.

Begic had followed what Burch was saying. He broke in, and through the interpreter said, "I spoke with the father after the incident. Openly and very confidentially. I asked him whether he was the one who had laid the mine. He swore by his children that he had not done it."

Burch acted unimpressed, but he seemed to be working toward the same conclusion. Referring to the collapse of Srebrenica, in 1995, he said, "It's true that these were the last people to hear of the surrender. They didn't know for twelve hours. I would have thought that in the general panic, with people going off to the battery factory to surrender ..." He continued, "I would be surprised if people here would have had the *time* to start laying traps."

Bach nodded. He asked, "What would have happened to the house after the owners left in '95? You think a mine was placed and blown?"

It was Begic who answered: "What was done usually was to rob it first and then burn it down."

Bach said, "So the Serbs came here, looted the house, burned it, and then maybe blew the walls. It sure looks that way, doesn't it? But then when they finished, would they have wanted to put a mine down there? I'm wondering if that could have happened in '95."

In the end Burch admitted that he didn't think so. He had started this visit, he later told me, wanting Bach to consider the extent of the unknowns. But when he took himself back to the time of the war, he found it hard to believe that any Serbs in their moment of victory could have

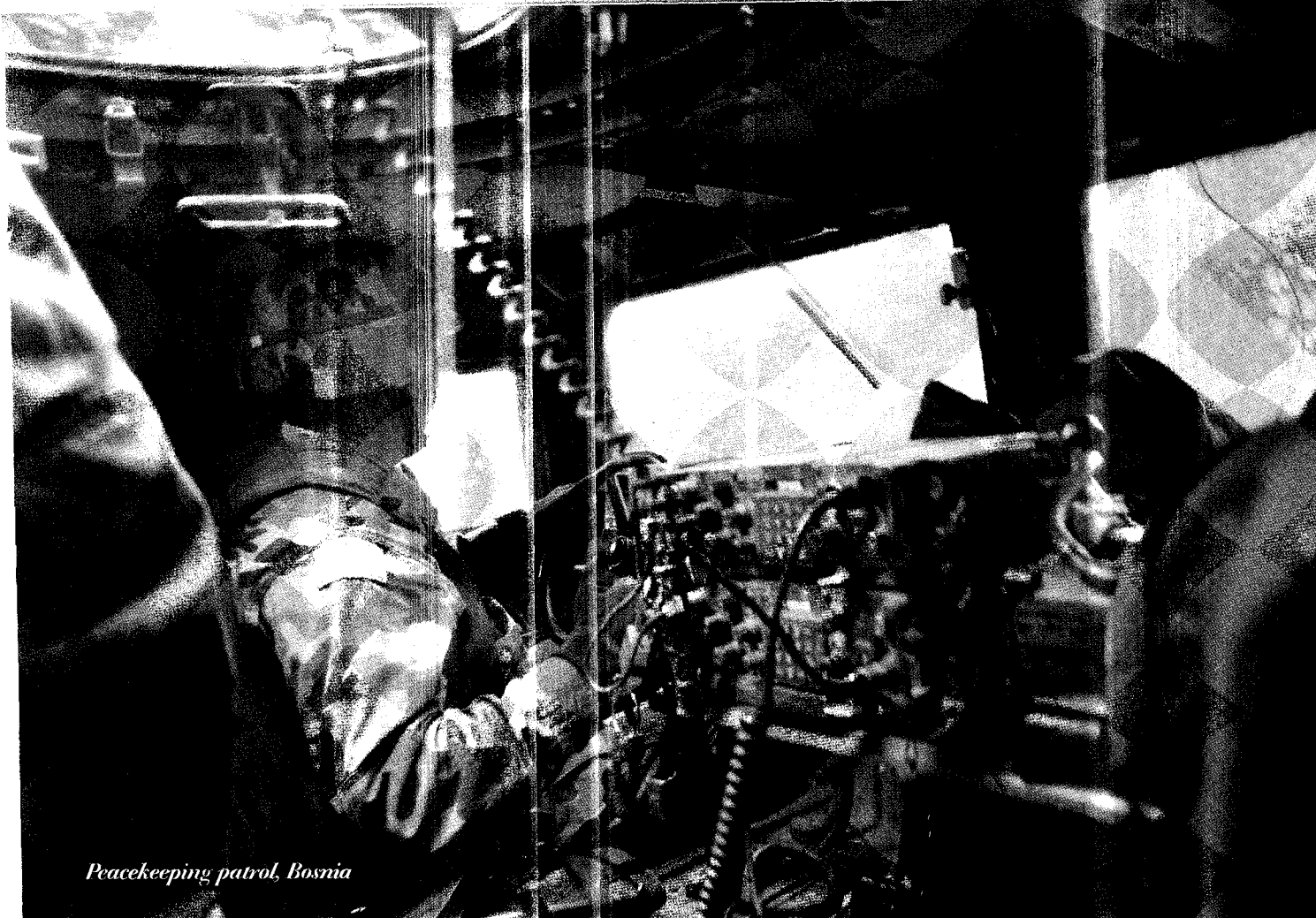
imagined that their enemies would dare to return, or that they would have seen reasons to set traps in the ruins. On the other hand, there were certainly reasons now, with the attempted return of Muslims. It seemed evident after talking it through, if there had been any doubt, that the mine had been recently laid, and possibly with official collusion. We walked back down the road. When we got to the vehicles, Refik Begic climbed into his Yugo and sped off toward Bratunac. The rest of us followed more slowly in the Land Cruiser.

Begic was having a good day. He set up a meeting at noon in his office, at which his wartime opponent, the Serb nationalist mayor Miodrag Josipovic, had to sit across the table from Bach for nearly an hour. The mayor had a handlebar moustache and a wide, brutal face, which was wreathed in cigarette smoke. Bach said, "You realize that American economic projects depend to a large extent on the success of the returnees." The mayor was unimpressed. So Bach brought up the new report on war criminals, without mentioning that the mayor was one of those named. Bach said, "What about bringing those people to justice?" That got the mayor's attention. He pounded on the table and threatened to leave. He talked about the war criminals on the Muslim side. Bach heard him out, and then asked Oliver Burch, as if he didn't know, "Was the mayor on that list?" And Burch answered, "Yeah ..." And Refik Begic, a mournful expression on his face, made it obvious that he was enjoying the show.

It hardly mattered what was said there anyway. On one side of the table, Bach represented the U.S. Army, and by his mere presence delivered a warning about the limits to Serb power. From the Pentagon down an enormous effort had gone into making such warnings credible. On the other side, after five years on the receiving end of peacekeeping, the mayor had a sense of the formal constraints on the American troops and of their fear of getting involved. He was wary of Bach, but also defiant and surprisingly sure of his ground. He talked about the lack of patience in the United States for the Balkans now. He seemed to think that as long as the attacks remained deniable, the U.S. Army would be unable to respond. I thought he was underestimating Bach, who clearly by now had confirmed his original view that the American presence along the Drina would have to be strengthened.

OUT ON PATROL

Colonel Bill Weber was keeping a close eye on the situation as well. After returning from one of his forays into the countryside, he said to me, "The switch between being a combat soldier and a peacekeeper is easy at this point. But if people were being injured, it would be very difficult. It would be a fine line." I asked him if he had seen something specific to cause him concern. He said he had not, but largely as a result of Bach's efforts, he



Peacekeeping patrol, Bosnia

had the Drina River in mind. Because of the land mine in Bljecevo, the process of Muslim returns had come nearly to a stop. Now an election was approaching, during which thousands of refugees would be bused back to their original homes to vote. They would stay just long enough to mark their ballots. But with the mood darkening along the Drina, the consensus at American headquarters was that the Army would have to appear in force to keep things calm.

Skip Sharp, with the advice of Weber, Bach, and a few others, decided to position most of the Srebrenica company—sixty out of a hundred soldiers—in the area for four days full time, and to position two additional companies downriver, beyond Bratunac. The commanders sent out an Army lawyer with contracts and cash to lease campsites just out of sight, on the outskirts of the towns. They planned to run a heavy schedule of patrols for two days prior to the election, and during the voting to lock those patrols into fixed and visible positions within quick driving range of each polling station. Beyond that, if Bach remained worried about the mood among the Serbs, they would have to see. There was always a possibility that the moderates would win the election, though the chances seemed slim.

I went to Srebrenica to stay with the troops. Their camp stood on a hilltop above the town. The soldiers had gone there expecting to rough it for a few days, but no sooner

had they arrived than a Brown & Root convoy had pulled up, and, to their amazement, a crew of Bosnian civilians had emerged to set up two heated tents with electric lights and cots, a line of portable toilets, and a big collection of white-plastic chairs. Rather than feeling grateful, the soldiers were a little annoyed. In their disgust many of them chose to sleep outside, crammed into their vehicles or stretched out in sleeping bags on the cold ground.

The days and nights passed as uneventfully as intended—endless hours spent on patrols, huddled freezing in the open-turreted Humvees, chewing on rations, and then locked down during the election for fifteen long hours at a ruined gas station, near the turnoff for Bljecevo. It was miserable, and I enjoyed it. The soldiers did too, though they expressed those thoughts in different ways. One man said, “An Army tour is like being on a cruise ship. There’s the all-you-can-eat buffet, the twenty-four-hour gym, and our next stop is ... Srebrenica, whose specialty is hospitality! On your left, a mass grave! On your right, a whorehouse!”

During the lockdown I sat in a Humvee with a lieutenant from Atlanta in the right seat, a machine gunner from Massachusetts in the turret, and a soft-talking guy from backwoods Kentucky behind the wheel. There wasn’t much to do. We watched the road, talked, and ate some MREs. I asked the lieutenant about the training back in Georgia. He laughed

and said, “*Stani ili pucam!*”—Serbo-Croatian for “Stop or I’ll shoot!” We were monitoring traffic, waiting for the Muslim election buses to pass. It was raining. A convoy of cars had rolled by with a Serbian flag hung from one of the windows. Now a bicyclist passed. The lieutenant radioed in a report: “Man traveling northbound on Huffy. Banana seat. Circa 1985.” He looked at me and said, “No detail is too small.” The radio came back: “Okay. Roger. Got it.”

The machine gunner was reading Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*. He had gone through three years of college, and he wanted to return and become a playwright. He had scored 128 out of a possible 130 on the Army entrance exam, and somehow had ended up in the infantry. He said, “Can you believe I worked in a bookstore for most of my high school?”

The driver said, “I believe that.”

The gunner said, “I used to read *Utne Reader*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Mountain Biking U.K.*”

The driver said, “You meet totally different people when you come in the Army.”

The gunner said, “I took a semester break ...”

That was three years before. The lieutenant had left a promising job at about the same time. His mother had cried because he was wrecking his life. Now he said, “It’s just something you have to do, you know?”

The driver said, “No you don’t.” He chuckled. He said, “If you look at it now, would you do it again? Leave that same job?”

“Yeah. I would.”

“Really? You was makin’ nice money.”

“When am I going to be this age again? What am I going to tell my grandchildren—that I sat in an office all day?”

“More like sat in your mansion.”

The gunner leaned down from the turret. “Instead you’re sitting in Humvees.”

The lieutenant said, “Yeah, there I was ... knee deep in the shit! My grandkids will say, ‘Were you in the shit?’ and I’ll say, ‘Yeah, I was in the shit!’”

The gunner said, “There I was.”

And the driver said, as if to himself, “I’ll be tellin’ *all* kind of stories.”

The long day finally came to a close. The election passed with hardly a glitch, and the ballots went off to Sarajevo to be counted. In the morning the American force faded away, leaving only the regular patrols to roam the Drina River. I roamed with them for a few days. Out of sight of the company commander, the soldiers did their own natural standing down, removing their helmets and flak vests, sitting in the cafés of Srebrenica, and relaxing among the peasants in the shattered mountain villages. They were not fighting World War II, but what they were doing was real—and effective. It’s true that they occupied positions of privilege at the end of a huge effort to put them on patrol. But they needed less of that effort than the Army supposed.

When the election results were announced, the news was ominous: radical Serbs had won by overwhelming margins all along the Drina River. With the political climate continuing to deteriorate, William Bach maintained the pressure for a stronger American presence in Bratunac, and the 3rd ID built a new small base right on the outskirts of town. The message got through to all sides, and after the winter snows melted, the process of Muslim returns began again, perhaps a little faster than before. There was no further violence. Largely because of the American efforts, the precarious peace was maintained.

The 3rd ID, however, paid a heavy price for its success. Last February, as the first and second rotations prepared to swap places, Skip Sharp was forced to downgrade the entire division to the Army’s second-lowest rating for wartime readiness, effectively removing it from its traditional role: standing by to defend the nation. The downgrade is a temporary setback, likely to be overcome sometime in 2002, when the final peacekeeping mission in Kosovo is scheduled to end and the division will at last have time to retrain, and presumably to regain its armored battlefield skills. Meanwhile, for the professional warriors of the 3rd ID—these guys who like to blow things up—the downgrade is of course an unpleasant condition to endure, and no less painful for being self-imposed. For some of them, it is proof enough that America is already dangerously overextended.

Still, in more-immediate operational terms it is possible to think about the division’s mission in Bosnia not merely as a tribulation to be endured but also as a useful experience with the sort of ambiguous military involvements—the operations other than war—that the United States will probably continue to face. Of the many competent young officers I met in the field, one said, “I grew up with a whole vision of Ronald Reagan, our military, the resurgence of American power in the world. That’s kind of what drew me to the military. Then the wall came down, and now it’s like, ‘Who’s the enemy?’ So it’s been different. But it’s not like everybody on patrol hates what he’s doing. It’s amazing how much people change after they get to Bosnia. It doesn’t take that long to understand we’re not here to kill.”

Of course there was the other side, too—the soldiers who resented the changes, and remained locked into an almost wistful view of simple dangers. For them the peacekeeping mission was a more troublesome deal. Late one night on Eagle Base a guard I was accompanying on his perimeter rounds began to shout into the darkness, “Enemies, come on! Come on!” He was really just joking around, making a show of his frustration. But in some ways he was like the Army as a whole. He was standing behind a fence, peering into the night, well fed and safe, and good at his job. He was big, and strong, and heavily armed. But after nearly a decade of peace he was unsettled by the lack of front lines. ▀

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JFK'S FIRST-STRIKE PLAN

The Berlin crisis of 1961 does not loom large in the American memory, but it was an episode that brought the United States and the Soviet Union close to war—nuclear war. Newly available documents reveal that the Kennedy White House drew up detailed plans for a nuclear first strike against the Soviets, and that President Kennedy explored the first-strike option seriously

BY FRED KAPLAN

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Forty years ago this month President John F. Kennedy sat in the Cabinet Room with his top national-security aides and discussed the idea of launching a nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union. This was no theoretical chat. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was threatening to take over West Berlin. War seemed not merely possible but likely. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had determined that the United States and its European allies could not defend West Berlin with conventional weapons alone. That left nuclear war as the alternative to surrender. During the summer of 1961 a small group of officials in the Pentagon and the White House had worked out a plan for a first strike that would virtually wipe out the Soviets'

nuclear arsenal, minimizing the chance of retaliation. The plan was concrete and highly detailed. It spelled out what flight paths the U.S. bombers should take, at what altitudes they should fly, and which targets they should hit with how many of what kinds of nuclear bombs. And it concluded that the mission was feasible—that there was a "fair probability" of success.

The existence of this plan was first revealed in a chapter of my book, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (1983), but that account relied almost entirely on interviews with former officials. Save for one or two highly circumstantial memoranda, whatever documents may have existed about the plan were locked in the vaults. The first-strike plan was mentioned in a couple of subsequent histories, but it was dismissed as a "back-of-the-envelope" calculation that Kennedy probably never saw.

With the fortieth anniversary of the Berlin crisis ap-



John F. Kennedy discusses the Berlin crisis at a press conference in June, 1961

proaching, I decided to see if any documents had surfaced in the two decades since my book was published. They had. The first-strike plan, it turns out, was put forth in a coldly analytical thirty-three-page memorandum to General Maxwell Taylor, Kennedy's special military adviser. (It was discovered among Taylor's papers at the National Archives and declassified through a Freedom of Information Act request by the National Security Archive, a private research organization.) Other documents, including many declassified over the past few years by the Kennedy Library, in Boston, show that the memo was passed on to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was discussed at meetings of the National Security Council, and was read—and seriously contem-

plated—by President Kennedy. The documents, never before described, reveal a new chapter of history.

A dozen years after the Berlin Wall came down and the Cold War ended, it is hard to imagine the fear and passion that once surrounded the very word "Berlin." The Berlin crisis of 1961 may be the forgotten crisis in the annals of superpower confrontation—obscured by the Cuban missile crisis, which followed it a year later. Even most citizens who lived through the event remember little about it. Yet the conflict over Berlin brought America and the Soviet Union no less close to war than did the high drama of those "thirteen days" over Cuba. Berlin was the centerpiece of struggle throughout the Cold War. It was where World War II ended in Europe, the Allied armies slamming into one another as they occupied Nazi Germany—the United States,

Britain, and France from the west, the Soviet Union from the east, carving out the separate zones of West and East Berlin. Soon afterward Germany itself split into West and East, and the border between the two hardened into the dividing line between Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe and free, capitalist Western Europe. West Berlin became an anomaly—a tiny landlocked island, claimed and protected by the Western powers but stuck a hundred miles inside Eastern territory. In 1948 Stalin imposed a blockade, cutting Berlin off from its Western suppliers. The United States responded with an airlift, keeping the zone alive for more than 300 days before access was restored. Ten years later Khrushchev threatened to put West Berlin under East German sovereignty by force, but he backed off after meeting with President Dwight Eisenhower at a Camp David summit. To every Western leader West Berlin shone as a beacon of freedom and a potent symbol of the U.S. commitment to resist Soviet aggression. To succumb to Soviet pressure on Berlin would be to destroy America's credibility worldwide. On this point there were no hawks and doves: all saw it as a fundamental truth.

In 1960, when Jack Kennedy was running for President, he predicted that Berlin would be a "test of our nerve and our will." In January of 1961, two weeks before Kennedy's inauguration, Khrushchev renewed his threat, demanding that the Western powers sever ties to Berlin, and vowing "resolute measures" if they resisted. The young President faced this test of nerve from the moment he took office.

On April 25 Kennedy sent a memo to his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, requesting a report on the status of military planning for a possible crisis over Berlin. McNamara replied on May 5: NATO could not defend West Berlin with conventional weapons alone. Even an airlift "would not succeed in reopening and maintaining air access in the face of determined Soviet opposition." McNamara made plans to reinforce U.S. troops and supplies in West Germany.

In June, Kennedy flew to Vienna to meet with Khrushchev. He hoped the summit would calm tensions, but they only worsened. Kennedy ended the summit famously grumbling, "It will be a cold winter."

Around the same time, Dean Acheson, who had helped to create the NATO military alliance while he was Secretary of State, under Harry Truman, wrote Kennedy a long memo on Berlin, which the President circulated widely. Acheson endorsed McNamara's plan to upgrade conventional forces, but warned that it would do no good unless the Soviets were convinced that any move against Berlin would trigger all-out war between the United States and the USSR—which, by definition in those days, meant nuclear war.

On July 7 Henry Kissinger, then a professor at Harvard and a part-time consultant to the National Security Council, wrote a memo to McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's national-security adviser, titled "General War Aspect of Berlin Contingency Planning." Kissinger wrote,

The Acheson report correctly points out that the President must make an early decision about his willingness to risk nuclear war over Berlin ... [However,] before he makes the decision he has to know what is meant by nuclear war. It would therefore seem to me essential that the nature of our nuclear options be defined now.

U.S. military policy at the time called for "massive retaliation" in the event of general war—shooting off all our nuclear weapons against every target in the Soviet Union, China, and parts of Eastern Europe, no matter how limited the cause of the war might be. This single integrated operational plan—or SIOP, as the military called it—was so tightly woven into the logistics and training of the U.S. Strategic Air Command that it would be impossible to launch a smaller-scale nuclear attack even if the President wanted to do so. The problem with this SIOP, in the view of many defense analysts, was that if the United States unleashed the full attack against the USSR, the Soviets would initiate a retaliatory strike once they saw the attack coming, ultimately killing tens of millions of Americans. So what to do? Many feared that a President in crisis would face the choice of "suicide or surrender," "holocaust or humiliation."

In his memo to Bundy, Kissinger said that the Pentagon "should be asked to submit a plan for graduated nuclear response"—using nuclear weapons in some limited way that might avoid both horns of the dilemma. He added, "I have discussed the problem with both Carl Kaysen and Henry Rowen."

Kaysen was another Harvard professor, on leave to serve as a special assistant to Bundy. Rowen was a nuclear strategist from the Rand Corporation, now serving as a deputy assistant secretary of defense under McNamara. Both are minor characters at best in the chronicles of history, but they took charge of organizing the first-strike plan.

The plan took shape at the start of the summer, when a Pentagon consultant named William W. Kaufmann, another Rand strategist, learned some startling news about the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Since the year before, the super-secret *Discoverer* spy satellites had been taking thousands of photographs over the Soviet Union. Kennedy had come into office railing about a "missile gap" that was giving the Soviets a dangerous edge over the West. The *Discoverer* photos revealed, however, that the gap went the other way: the United States was far ahead. The Soviets had no more than eight intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Their bombers sat out on open runways. Their air-defense batteries were virtually worthless.

Back at Rand, Kaufmann had pondered in theory the problem that Kennedy now faced in fact—how to use nuclear weapons in a nonsuicidal way if, say, the Soviets invaded Western Europe and we could not stop them with conventional forces. He had proposed the possibility of launching a disarming nuclear first strike against the Soviets' missile sites and bomber bases, holding in reserve many more

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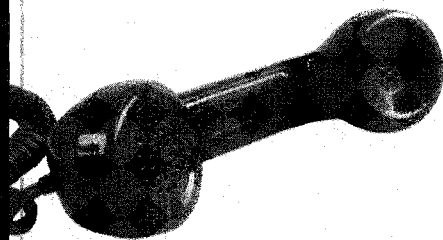
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nuclear weapons, and threatening to fire them at Soviet cities if the Soviet Union did not pull back. Some colleagues had told Kaufmann that his plan was unrealistic. But now he saw a way it might work. If the Soviets had only a few nuclear weapons and terrible air defenses, maybe the United States could knock out the whole Soviet nuclear arsenal in a very small sneak attack.

Rowen had been a close friend of Kaufmann's at Rand. Kaufmann told him about the implications of the *Discoverer* data. Kaufmann says that Rowen took him to meet Kaysen, who in turn informed Kissinger and Bundy of the findings.

On July 7, the same day that Kissinger wrote his memo to Bundy about a "graduated" use of nuclear weapons, Bundy passed the suggestion on to Kennedy, saying that he, Kissinger, and Kaysen "all agree that the current strategic war plan is dangerously rigid and ... may leave you very little choice as to how you face the moment of thermonuclear truth."

Six days later Kennedy held an NSC meeting on Berlin. Among the items on the agenda: "steps to prepare war plans which would permit the discriminating use of nuclear weapons in Central Europe and ... against the USSR."

By July 21 the issue had percolated through the upper echelons of the national-security bureaucracy. An NSC memo, marked up by Bundy, stated, "The whole question of military courses of action in the event access is blocked needs to be studied more effectively." One issue, which the memo said the President needed to consider, was "nuclear war: how to make it more flexible."

On July 25 Kennedy went on national television to outline his concerns about a possible crisis over Berlin, and to announce an increase in the defense budget for more troops and ammunition. In a memo to McNamara he called for greater attention to civil defense and fallout shelters.

On August 13, before dawn, East German soldiers pulled construction vehicles up to the border between East and West Berlin, and started to erect the Berlin Wall. At first Kennedy saw this step as the end of the crisis. Khrushchev had been so determined to block access to West Berlin in part because more than 10,000 East German citizens a month were crossing into West Berlin and emigrating from there to West Germany. But the wall unleashed loud protests from European diplomats. The crisis continued.

Kaysen and Rowen finished their first-strike study a few weeks later. On September 5 Kaysen, who had taken over the drafting of the plan, sent General Taylor the resulting thirty-three-page memo, titled "Strategic Air Planning and Berlin." It included a very detailed description of the existing U.S. nuclear-war plan. SIOP-62, as the plan was known, called for sending in the full arsenal of the Strategic Air Command—2,258 missiles and bombers carrying a total of 3,423 nuclear weapons—against 1,077 "military and urban-industrial targets" throughout the "Sino-Soviet

Bloc." Kaysen reported that if the SIOP were executed, the attack would kill 54 percent of the USSR's population and destroy 82 percent of its buildings. Kaysen asked,

Is this really an appropriate next step after the repulse of a three-division attack across the zonal border between East and West Germany? Will the President be ready to take it?... Soviet retaliation is inevitable; and most probably, it will be directed against our cities and those of our European allies.

What is required in these circumstances is something quite different. We should be prepared to initiate general war by our own first strike, but one planned for this occasion, rather than planned to implement a strategy of massive retaliation. We should seek the smallest possible list of targets, focussing on the long-range striking capacity of the Soviets, and avoiding, as much as possible, casualties and damage in Soviet civil society. We should maintain in reserve a considerable fraction of our own strategic striking power; this will deter the Soviets from using their surviving forces against our cities; our efforts to minimize Soviet civilian damage will also make such abstention more attractive to them, as well as minimizing the force of the irrational urge for revenge.

It was a plan straight out of the Rand Corporation, straight out of *Dr. Strangelove* (except that Stanley Kubrick didn't make that dark satire for another two years). It was a plan to wage *rational* nuclear war.

Kaysen then laid out the details of the plan. "There are three types of targets which it seems essential to destroy in the first wave of an attack," he wrote. These were the forty-six home bases for Soviet nuclear bombers, the bombers' twenty-six staging bases, and the up to eight ICBM sites (with two "aiming points" for each site, or sixteen targets in all), for a total of eighty-eight targets—or, in the military parlance, DGZs (for "designated ground zeros").

"If we destroy a total of 88 DGZ's," the memo continued, "we will have eliminated or paralyzed the nuclear threat to the United States sufficiently to permit follow-on attacks for mop-up purposes or for the elimination of other targets." Given that some of these DGZs were within twenty minutes' flying time of one another—meaning that several of SAC's bombers could hit one set of targets and then move on to hit another—Kaysen estimated that the first strike could be carried out by a mere fifty-five bombers. He calculated that almost none of the planes would be shot down, and cited a CIA intelligence estimate of July 11 stating that the Soviet air-defense system "would lose most of its effectiveness" if bombers flew in at low altitudes.

Kaysen acknowledged the need for more "detailed operational studies and exercises" to test these assumptions. "But," he added, "there are numerous reasons for believing that the assumptions are reasonable, that we have the wherewithal to execute the raid, and that, while a wide range of outcomes is possible, we have a fair probability of achieving a substantial measure of success."

The calculations foretold a fairly clean attack, by the

standards of nuclear-war planning. "Given the locations of the targets," Kaysen wrote, "[Soviet] mortalities from the initial raid might be less than 1,000,000 and probably not much more than 500,000." The implication seems to have been that a million casualties would not be terrible enough to incite in the Soviet leadership an "irrational urge for revenge." However, Kaysen also noted that these numbers assumed "no gross errors in the bombing." Furthermore, if some Soviet weapons survived the attack and the Soviet leaders retaliated, quite a bit of damage could be done to the United States. Again, the range of possibilities was very wide—depending on whether the Soviet weapons were aimed at cities or at military targets, whether they were designed to explode in the air or on the ground (the latter would produce more radioactive fallout), and whether or not American citizens hid in fallout shelters. Kaysen provided two charts, labeled "Prompt Deaths from Alternative Bombing Attacks (Deaths Due to Blast and Prompt Radiation)" and "Deaths from Alternative Attacks on U.S. Cities (Blast and Fallout, All Weapons Ground Burst)." Depending on the assumptions, American fatalities would range from negligible in the best case to 75 percent of the population in the worst case. "In thermonuclear warfare," Kaysen wrote, "people are easy to kill."

However, he emphasized, "The choice may not be between 'go' and 'no-go'; it may be between 'go' and SIOP-62. Compared with SIOP-62, the small-scale, minimum-warning attack—coupled with carefully timed and executed follow-on raids—has distinct advantages."

Two weeks later, on September 19, Kennedy sent Taylor a list of questions to pass on to General Lyman Lemnitzer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Tom-

my Power, the commander-in-chief of SAC, to be discussed at a meeting that the four were scheduled to have the next day. The questions clearly indicate that Kennedy had read Kaysen's memo, or at least a very detailed summary of it.

"Berlin developments may confront us with a situation where we may desire to take the initiative in the escalation of conflict from the local to the general war level," the President wrote. Referring to SAC's existing nuclear-war plan, he asked,

Is it possible to get some alternatives into the plan? ... Is it now possible to exclude urban areas or governmental controls, or both, from attack? ... How would you plan an attack that would use a minimum-sized force against Soviet long-range striking power only? ... Would it be possible to achieve surprise with such a plan during a period of high tension? ... Would not an alternate first strike plan, even if only partially successful when implemented, leave us in a better position than we would be if we had to respond to an enemy first strike? ... Is this idea of a first strike against the Soviets' long-range striking power a feasible one?

Kennedy also posed questions about some risks that Kaysen had not considered, indicating that the President was doing his own thinking, and possibly developing his own skepticism, about the matter. "I am concerned over my ability to control our military effort once a war begins," he wrote.

I assume I can stop the strategic attack at any time, should I receive word the enemy has capitulated. Is this correct? ... Although one nuclear weapon will achieve the desired results, I understand that, to be assured of success, more than one weapon is programmed for each target. If the first weapon succeeds, can you prevent additional weapons from inflicting redundant destruction?

At the next day's meeting nobody addressed these questions. According to the minutes, General Power spent most of the time claiming that the Soviets had hidden away "many times more" missiles than the CIA's spy photos had indicated—a point that Lemnitzer and Taylor disputed. Power, a flamboyant commander who never warmed to the notion of "limited nuclear strikes," told the President that "the time of our greatest danger of a Soviet surprise attack is now" and advised that "if a general atomic war is inevitable, the U.S. should strike first."

Kennedy seems to have ignored this rant; he returned to his main concern—whether he could really launch a sneak attack without provoking catastrophic retaliation. He asked the generals "to come up with an answer to this question: how much information does the Soviet Union need, and how *long* do they need to launch their missiles?"

It is unclear whether the question was ever answered, but Kennedy remained interested in exploring a first-strike option. On October 10 he met with top officials and generals in the Cabinet Room to discuss contingency plans for Berlin. Prior to the meeting Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, who was aware of the Kaysen-Rowen study, had drawn up—in consultation with the Joint Chiefs—a docu-

MYSTERY OF THE SPHINX

"Marsh," Gabe would softly say and nod
toward the Red
Baron lazing
by a sunny

windowsill. She'd turn from her book
to take a look,
then both begin
to chuckle in

sheer delight. I'd look up too, but
all I saw? Fat
cat on a chair
just lying there.

—CATHY SMITH BOWERS

ment titled "Preferred Sequence of Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict." The document laid out four scenarios in outline form.

I. If the Soviets interfered with access to Berlin, the Allies should send out a platoon.

II. If the Soviets persisted, the Allies should "mobilize and reinforce rapidly to improve capability for taking actions."

III. If the Soviets still didn't stop, the Allies "should take one or more of the following military courses of action:"

A. Naval blockade [target unspecified].

B. "Expanding non-nuclear air action" and "ground defensive strength."

C. "Expanding non-nuclear ground advance into [East German] territory, with strong air support." Here, though, Nitze noted, "This is a politically oriented military operation aiming to display to the Soviets the approaching danger of possibly irreversible escalation. Military overpowering of determined Soviet resistance is not feasible."

IV. "If, despite Allied use of substantial non-nuclear forces, the Soviets continue to encroach upon our vital interests, *then* the Allies should use nuclear weapons."

This could be done gradually, as follows:

A. "Selective nuclear attacks for the primary purpose of demonstrating the will to use nuclear weapons."

B. "Limited tactical employment of nuclear weapons" on the battlefield.

C. "General nuclear war."

During the meeting, according to Bundy's minutes, Kennedy asked "whether in fact there was much likelihood that IV. A. and B. could be undertaken without leading to IV. C."—in other words, whether nuclear weapons could be used in small doses without escalating to all-out nuclear war.

Nitze believed "that since IV. A. and B. would greatly increase the temptation to the Soviets to initiate a strategic strike of their own, it would be best for us, in moving toward the use of nuclear weapons, to consider most seriously the option of an initial strategic strike of our own"—in short, executing the Kaysen-Rowen plan. "With such a strike," Bundy wrote, summarizing Nitze's remarks, "we could in some real sense be victorious in the series of nuclear exchanges, while we might well lose if we allowed the Soviets to strike first."

McNamara, on the other hand, felt "that neither side could be sure of winning by striking first and that the consequences to both sides of a strategic exchange would be so devastating that both sides had a very high interest in avoiding such a result."

Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who had been left out of these contemplations until now, remarked that "the first side to use nuclear weapons will carry a very grave responsibility and endure heavy consequences before the rest of the world."

Bundy summed it up: "The division of opinion over Paragraph IV was not flatly resolved."

The controversy was taken up once more on October 20. In a memo about that day's upcoming meeting on Berlin,

Bundy told Kennedy that the matter remained "unresolved," adding, "This issue, bluntly, is whether we can and should have nuclear strikes short of the massive strategic attack which is the current basic plan for general war ... again you may wish to press for continued analysis." Here Bundy wrote in by hand, "McNamara has just called to say they are not prepared on this for today."

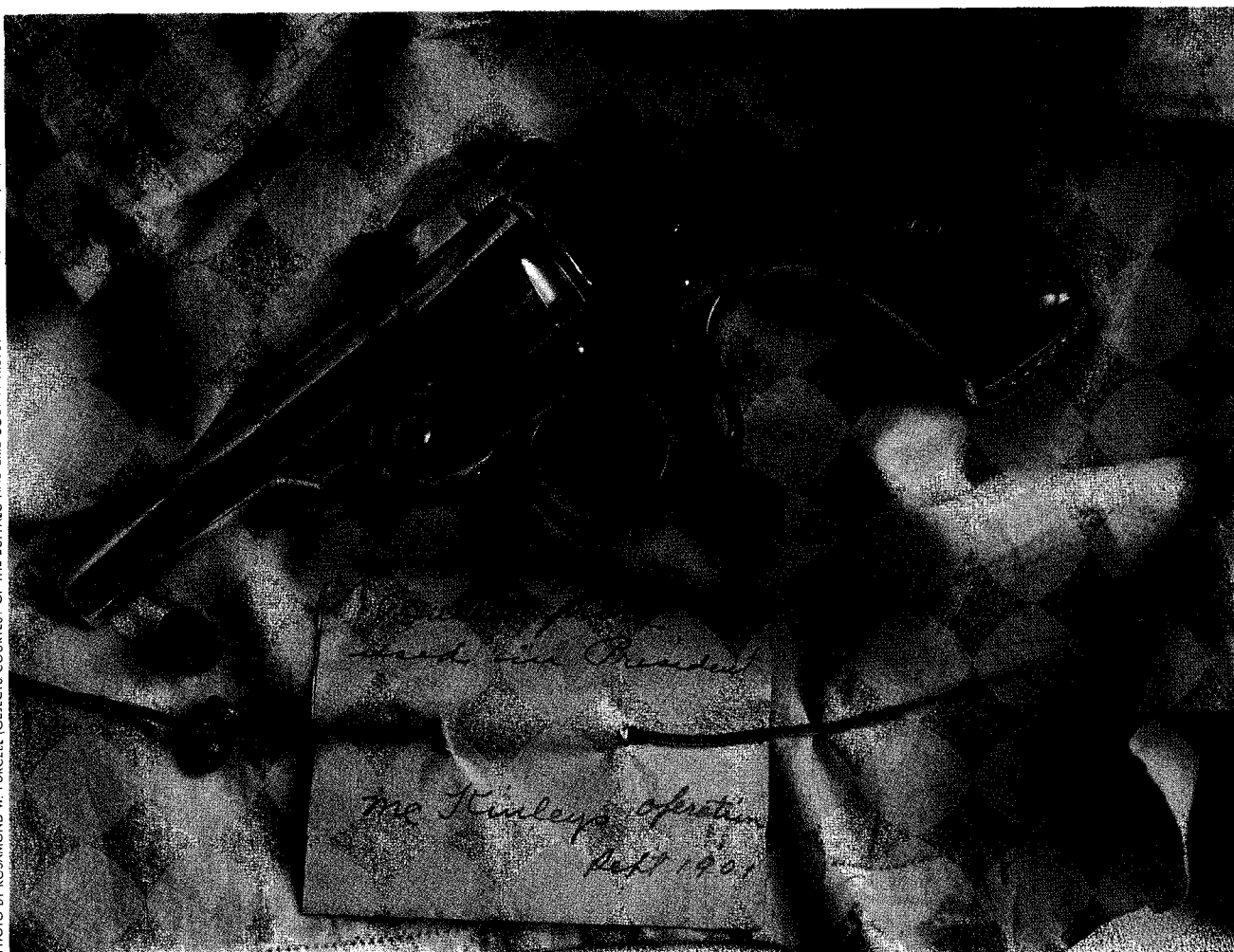
Finally Kennedy decided to send his own message to Khrushchev—a warning. On October 21, on Kennedy's orders, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric gave a speech in Hot Springs, Virginia, that let everyone know for the first time—and let Khrushchev know we knew—that there was no missile gap. He revealed how many nuclear weapons we had, emphasized that the arsenal would be second to none even after a Soviet attack, and said, "The Iron Curtain is not so impenetrable as to force us to accept at face value the Kremlin's boasts." For years Khrushchev had bragged of a tremendous Soviet missile arsenal. He had based his diplomatic threats about Berlin on the assumption that the United States still believed the boast. Now he knew the game was over.

Gilpatric's speech came in the middle of the Communist Party Congress, so Khrushchev felt he had to respond. He proceeded with plans to detonate a thirty-megaton hydrogen bomb, the largest tested to date. The night after Gilpatric's speech, as the ranking U.S. diplomat drove to an opera in East Berlin, East German border guards blocked his way. Over the next few days the confrontation became tenser, climaxing on October 28, when thirty tanks from each side faced one another for sixteen hours at a range of a hundred yards. But the Gilpatric speech seems to have had its desired effect. After some back-channel diplomacy between Kennedy and Khrushchev, the crisis ended. For the next twenty-eight years Berlin would be a city divided by the physical barrier of the wall; but the Soviets would never again subject West Berlin to overt intimidation.

The crisis left two main legacies: First, it led directly to the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962. After October of 1961 Khrushchev saw that he needed *real* military leverage if he was going to make another play for Berlin. Installing medium-range missiles in Cuba, within close range of U.S. targets, would have the same effect as a crash buildup of ICBMs. Khrushchev failed in Cuba and lost his job. His successors ordered the crash buildup, which helped to accelerate the nuclear arms race that would dominate international politics over the next quarter century.

Second, even as the Berlin crisis mounted, Robert McNamara ordered changes in the U.S. nuclear-war plan. The new version, called SIOP-63, and all the subsequent revisions, ensured that future Presidents, who might face their own "moment of thermonuclear truth," would have at least the appearance of "flexible options"—including variations on John F. Kennedy's first-strike plan. ■

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SPECIAL COLLECTIONS *Centennial of an Assassination*

In September of 1901 a woman named Wilhelmina Aschbacher was working at the Pendrick Laundry, in Buffalo, New York. Among Pendrick's regular customers were the Milburns, a prominent local family who were that month playing hosts to an even more prominent guest: President William McKinley. The President was in town to visit the Pan-American Exposition. On the afternoon of September 6, while greeting well-wishers at the expo's Temple of Music, the President was approached by Leon Czolgosz, a twenty-eight-year-old anarchist who concealed the revolver in his hand by wrapping it in a handkerchief. Czolgosz shot the President twice before being subdued. As McKinley was carried off, Private Francis P. O'Brien, of the United States Seacoast Artillery, scooped up Czolgosz's gun, a nickel-plated .32-caliber Iver Johnson revolver; the gun eventually ended up in the district attorney's office, but not before O'Brien and another soldier, Corporal Bertschey, had carved their initials in it.

That's how it was in Buffalo. While the President lay in a guest bed at the Milburn home, almost everyone else in town was snatching up any item related to the shooting,

either for evidence or as a souvenir—the handkerchief Czolgosz had used to conceal the revolver, the handcuffs used to restrain him afterward, the bullets fired and unfired, the scalpels and probes and clamps and scissors the surgeons used in operating on the President. Within hours every single piece of McKinley-related memorabilia at the expo—medals, coins, buttons, plaques, trays, paperweights—had been sold, usually for many times the original asking price.

One vendor even generated new memorabilia, printing up white ribbons that declared PAN-AMERICA REJOICES. OUR PRESIDENT WILL LIVE. But these, too, soon became relics; on September 14 William McKinley died. Afterward the Milburns sent his nightgown to the Pendrick Laundry. It disappeared, although many years later a small piece of it was presented to the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society (which already had in its collection the revolver, the bullets, the handkerchief, the handcuffs, the surgical implements, and dozens of other McKinley relics) by a local woman named Ruth Scholz. It had been given to her by her mother, Wilhelmina Aschbacher. —RICHARD RUBIN

WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN?

*Interviews with a paramedic, a social worker, an undertaker,
and a mother about their experiences with death and dying*

BY STUDS TERKEL

Illustration by Marc Yankus

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*Will the circle be unbroken,
By and by, Lord, by and by.
There's a better home awaiting
Far beyond the starry sky.*

—old hymn, sung by Doc Watson

On December 23, 1999, as I was beginning to interview people for a new book on death and dying, my wife, Ida, died. She had been my companion for sixty years. She was eighty-seven. A few months later a friend of mine, disturbed by my occasional despondency, burst out, "For chrissake, you've had sixty great years with her!" Ida had lived seventeen years beyond her traditionally allotted three score and ten, though on occasion I'd heard her murmur in surprise, "Why do I still feel like a girl?" They were roller-coaster years we shared, after I first spotted her, in a maroon smock, in 1937. She was a social worker during most of those tumultuous years: the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, Joe McCarthy, the sixties, the civil-rights and peace movements. She was, as they say, "involved." Carry Wills remembers her greeting him, years after the Vietnam War had ended, with "Oh, we were arrested together in Washington."

A year or so before Ida's death Laura Watson, a neighbor, "looked out the window and saw this slim young girl in jeans, with a flower in her hair, plucking out weeds in her garden." The girl looked up. "It was Ida, of course." Gwendolyn Brooks's bet was "She could dance on a moonbeam."

Yes, she did live to the ripe old age of eighty-seven, but it doesn't cut the mustard, Charlie. I still see that girl in the maroon smock who liked yellow daisies. Each week there is a fresh bunch of yellow daisies near the windowsill. On the sill is the urn containing her ashes. On occasion, either indignant or somewhat enthusiastic about something, I mumble toward it (her), "Whaddya think of that, kid?"

Naturally, when I pick up a newspaper these days, the

first place I turn to isn't sports, or arts, or the business of business, or the op-eds. I immediately turn to the obituaries. The old doggerel with which many mature readers may be acquainted has become my mantra.

I wake up each morning and gather my wits,
I pick up the paper and read the obits.
If my name is not in it, I know I'm not dead,
So I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed.

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ED REARDON

A Chicago paramedic

I'm a Chicago boy, born and raised on the North Side. I spent about fifteen years on the job as a paramedic in Chicago, working the streets all over the city. Ostensibly, you're the eyes and the ears of a doctor. When a doctor can't be on the scene, they'll send guys like us. I like to call us 'gutter medics,' because we work in the gutter, we work wherever we find a patient. Sometimes it takes you to some pretty strange places, strange situations. The police don't have paramedics. Chicago's paramedics are strictly underneath the fire department's auspices. We work twenty-four hours. We start at eight in the morning, we get off at eight in the morning. You take two days off, and every fourth day you'd get a day off. That gave you essentially five days off in a row, so you had time to decompress. During a twenty-four-hour period, when I first started out, we could do easily twenty-five runs, be a minimum of one run an hour. No sooner would you put a patient down than you'd be picking up another one. You'd be going like that all day for twenty-four hours. So when you got off work in the morning, there really wasn't much left of you. You spent your first day walking around in a daze. The day after that, you'd just be recuperating, and then you'd go back to work.

"There was a set protocol that we would follow. Some-

times life isn't black and white, it's all nothing but shades of gray. By law, we cannot pronounce someone dead. It takes a physician to pronounce someone dead. If you have a skeleton there, you know the guy's dead. Profound post-mortem lividity: that's where the blood is all settled in the lower regions of the body and there's no resuscitating this guy. Decapitation: the head's cut off. Profound rigor mortis: where he's as stiff as a board and you're not going to budge him. It doesn't take a medical genius to spot someone who's dead. But by law, we're obliged to at least make an effort. Sometimes you have to make calls that are really going to put you on the line. For instance, we were called into a home and the guy was dying of cancer. He was in his bed, he had his family around him, and you could see that the disease had completely ravaged him. He was unconscious but he was gasping for air; he was breathing his last breaths. I called the hospital and I said, 'Listen, here's what we got. The family doesn't want him resuscitated. There's no point. What should we do here?' They don't know what to tell us. They don't want to stick their necks out. They don't want to say, 'Okay, do not resuscitate.' This was before there was such a thing as living wills. I know that if we don't make some kind of a decision, this guy, his last moments are going to be very undignified. We're going to go through a whole resuscitation. That means doing CPR, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, on him, putting a tube down his throat. In a situation like this it would be debasing him. He's not quite a vegetable, but he's not going to be viable. As we're sitting there, he literally breathes his last breath. He utters out a shout and he stops breathing. I look around and I mean, I see it's a Catholic family, we're a block away from the church that I grew up in, Saint Andrew's Church. From my Catholic upbringing, I went to them and I said I'd already called a priest and he was on his way. I said, 'Why don't we gather around and say a prayer to Saint Joseph?'—the patron saint of a happy death. Saint Joseph is the patron saint of just about everything, actually, but a happy death is the one thrown in there. The family went with that. They thought it was a great idea. We kept them calmed down. We took the guy, we put him in the ambulance, and we took him to the hospital to be pronounced. Now I'm wondering, When I get there, am I going to run into some doctor or some nurse who's going to call me on this? As it turned out, the doctor understood our position, the priest was there. It was fine with the family. He was dead and he was going to stay dead.

"You can't afford to leave yourself, any part of yourself, with any one of the victims. Grief is grief. Denial is denial. I don't think anything used to make me more angry than suicides. The worst suicide that I ever saw wasn't gory or anything like that. It was really contained. It was a nineteen-year-old kid who took a shotgun, put it in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. For some reason it didn't make a mess like you would expect it to. He sat in a very contained po-

sition against the wall. And it was the attitude that we found him in, the body, bare feet. He looked like a child, he looked like a kid. He left a suicide note on the counter. That was my big mistake—reading it. You separate yourself from things and you develop a thick skin. You try not to identify with the people that you have to deal with. Well, this kid left a note to his father and his brother about how he was tired of being treated as if he were retarded because he was very hard of hearing. He couldn't talk right, and he couldn't hear. And that's what drove this kid to suicide. My big mistake was instead of looking at him and walking out of the room and forgetting about it, I bothered to read the note. And that's why it stuck in my head, it stuck in my mind."

MATTA KELLY

A worker at the University of Illinois Community Outreach Intervention Project, School of Public Health

"I don't know anything about living wills. But I knew there was a form that all the case managers had that was like, 'I don't want to be hooked up to a machine.' So we filled out this form. So Norma, she was an African-American transvestite, used to come in the office all the time. But she would always come in and say to me, 'Matta, do you still have my papers, my living will? I want to make sure that you take care of me when I'm dead. I don't want to be hooked up to no machines. When I'm buried, I want to look my best. Make sure that I have a nice wig, make sure that I have a nice dress.' We know how the HIV makes people suffer. It progresses into loss of weight, all kinds of bad, bad illnesses. We talked about it—that maybe it would be better if she took a really, really nice picture when she's all dressed up, and I would keep that picture until she died. And she did that. She got a picture, she was all dressed up with a red dress. Around Christmastime she had taken the picture, very nice.

"So I get a call one day. She's in a coma. This was just last year. So I go to the hospital. Norma had a boyfriend, Wayne. Now it was my job to figure out a way to sell the boyfriend onto what Norma wanted. Because Norma never told the boyfriend that she didn't want to be hooked up to machines. She, Norma, was a nurse's aide at one time in her life, so she knew a lot about being hooked up to machines. When I got to the hospital, I met the boyfriend, and Norma was all hooked up and swollen. The doctors told me that she was in liver failure, but she had a chance to come out of it. This went on for almost a month. I would go up there a couple or three times a week, when they needed me to sign papers. They were trying this and they were trying some other thing. They always had to ask my permission when they wanted to do something, because I have the power of attorney. In the meantime, I had gone into her room and I was standing next to her and she smelled very bad around



her head. She had a hairpiece on. I was smelling around her to see if I could find where the smell was coming from, and it was coming from the hairpiece. I know the nurses and doctors could smell the same thing I did. When I lifted up the hairpiece, Norma had obviously glued it on with glue and it was all molded and rotted. And I had to get scissors myself and cut that piece off the top of her head.

"Then I started thinking Norma would not want this. She would absolutely not want this. So I started talking to them about taking her off the ventilator. Pull the plug. She had three different doctors: the head doctor, the doctor in the middle, and then the lowest one on the totem pole. All of them were telling me different things. One of them said, 'If we unplug her, she will die.' The other one said, 'If we unplug her, she might live and she might continue to breathe.' And the third one was telling me, 'If we unplug her, it's going to be a really ugly death and she's going to be gasping and she's going to suffer.' So I had to think some more about this. This was such a difficult decision. This was a decision to take a human life. And I am not a trained person. The only thing I can go by are my instincts and my compassion, and what she wanted.

"Without my knowledge, they moved her to a coma center. It's where everybody is hooked up to machines. First I called to see how she was. When I called, I asked about Norma Sanders. And they are telling me, 'Oh, you mean Norman Sanders?' I said, 'No, Norma Sanders.' They kept telling me, 'Oh, there must be a misunderstanding on the computer.' I think I heard them giggling in the background. So when I went to the hospital, I was very upset. I asked to speak to the head nurse. I brought a picture of Norma with me, that beautiful picture of her. And I said, 'This is the person that's lying in that bed. She always lived as a woman. She wants to be treated as a woman. And she wants to die like a woman.' [A pause.] They all were laughing, showing it around, 'Look at this, look at this.' I was very upset. I asked to speak to the head person, and I told him, 'I'm really upset. This person wants to die, number one, with dignity.' So what I did, I stuck her picture above her bed in that coma center. And I asked them to take her off the ventilator because I wanted to allow her to die. [Infuriated.] And they're still arguing with me. 'Oh, we have to get the ethics committee together,' and all this crap. I had a liv-

ing will and they wanted to talk about ethics, okay? They had told me, 'She will never come out of this. Her kidneys have failed, her liver has failed, her heart is failing.' But they want to keep her there on that ventilator thing. I met with the social workers and I told them that I wanted her unplugged and they were supposed to unplug her the following day. I had the right.

"So I went into Norma's room. I stuck my finger in her hand like this ... and I told her, I said, 'Norma, I have promised you for ten years that I would make sure that you died with dignity. I would make sure that you wouldn't have to be in pain. And I'm here to take care of your wishes. If you understand me, squeeze my finger.' And she squeezed my finger. And then I told her, I said, 'Norma, your cats are okay. Your rent is paid. Wayne is fine. Everything is taken care of. Your house is clean. Phone bill is paid. Everything is okay. You can just let go. I know you're in pain. I know you want to stop this. If you still want me to do what I promised you, squeeze my finger.' And she squeezed my finger. The next morning she died from a heart attack. And that was the story of Norma."

WILLIAM HERDEGEN

A semi-retired funeral director in Chicago. He once had five funeral homes in the city but now has only this one.

"After high school I attended Worsham College of Mortuary Science, in 1948. It was actually a two-year course in one year. We went to school from eight in the morning until five at night. If you were working in the morgue on a body, you had to complete it, no matter if it took you till six o'clock. We learned embalming, of course. Removing the blood out of the body and replacing it with embalming fluid to preserve the remains. I waited till I got my full license before I went into the service in 1952, the Korean War. I was with the Ninety-second Armored. I was there only thirty-nine days, and we were shelled about thirty of them. The battery commander finally says, 'I see here by your records you're a licensed mortician. What are you doing in the artillery?' So they transferred me into the Fortieth Infantry Division, and that's where I worked myself up to head of the burial detail. I was in the Division of Graves Registration. The bodies were all taken to an airfield and then sent back to Japan, where they were processed for shipping back home. We had no morgue set up for preparation of the bodies. We were only a couple of miles behind the lines. We just had to get them out of there, fast. It was very scary at first. Our company buried over three hundred enemy dead right there on the spot.

"I came back home in 1954 and for three years worked in several funeral homes in Chicago. Old established ones. I went on my own in March of 1957. I bought out George Westphall, who was there since 1907. Three years ago I gave my son the business. I'm semi-retired now, but I still come

in on weekends so he has a couple days off to be with his family. I remember my first case when I started my own business. It was Mr. Knights, a good friend of my mother-in-law's. He lived on Clybourn Avenue. Since then I think I've buried most of that family. They stuck with me. It was a little scary at first. I did everything myself. In fact, I still do, even when I come in on the weekends. If we have a death call, I go out on it, and I come back and embalm the body. If the person dies at home, then we go to the home. We have to call the doctor to sign the death certificate. Then we go and pick up the remains, bring it back to the funeral home. Most of the time it's two or three o'clock in the morning, so the family'll come in about nine o'clock the next day and make funeral arrangements. By that time I've got the body all embalmed and everything. I work all night, all hours. Seven days a week, three-hundred-sixty-five days a year, we're on call. Now I'm on call Friday night till Monday morning, when Joe, my son, comes.

"The main thing was, you try and comfort them and help them. Especially if it's a woman. A lot of times the man did everything and the woman didn't know what to do, so you would help. If the man had been a veteran, I'd take them to the veterans' office, over on Belmont, when it was there. Billy Duffy—I buried him when he died—would fill out all the papers for them so they'd get their benefits. Then I would take them to the Social Security office, sign them up for their benefits. Then I would take them, if they had insurance, I would take them to the insurance office. People would talk about how nice I was and everything. Of course, I had the time. I didn't have that big a business.

"At first many funeral directors were afraid to handle people with AIDS. We were the first. I think my first case was in 1985. The man was a very good friend of mine. I said, 'You don't look good.' He said, 'I can't go to the doctor, I don't have any money.' I talked to a friend of mine, and he says, 'Take him to the hospital and just leave him there, and they'll have to take care of him.' I took him to the University of Illinois. I went to see him the following day, and his door was closed. The nurse says, 'You can't go in there.' I said, 'What do you mean?' She says, 'You gotta put on a gown and mask—we think he's got tuberculosis.' I put on the mask and the gown. The next day I came, there's a sign—You must see the nurse at the station before you can go in to visit. I went there and they said, 'You've got to put on full gown and mask.' And I says, 'Yeah, I know from when I was here yesterday.' 'No, he's got AIDS,' she says, 'be very careful.' That was how I first started.

"I was on the board of directors for Chicago Funeral Directors. I was put on the infectious-disease committee. I talked to the different doctors. They told me what to do. I had a funeral director from Libertyville call me, and he says, 'I got an AIDS case. I don't want it. Do you want it? I'll send it down to you.' I says, 'Yeah, no problem.' So the people come in and they said, 'We've been to three funeral

homes. None of them would take him. I want to tell you right now, my brother's got AIDS.' I said, 'No problem.' The others were afraid of catching it.

"I was the only one for three years, till '88. Then it was mandatory under the American Disabilities Act. They had to start taking them. One case sticks in my mind. This man came in, and he said, 'My partner died.' He had durable power of attorney. He wanted to go back home after his partner died. His partner's mother says, 'We don't need you. We don't welcome you no more.' He went home, and the following week he hung himself. So we had the two within a week's time. I'll never forget that.

"I've had actors, florists, caterers, the organist from church here died of AIDS. Like I say, I've had every walk of life. The one case I had, a boy was in Vietnam and his father was, I believe, a colonel. The boy stepped in front of a train and the train hit him. My son and I worked about eight hours on him, putting him back together. The father insisted he wanted to see him. One arm was tore off. We sewed it back on. The father took a look at him and he says, 'It don't look like ...' I said, 'It wouldn't.' There was nothing missing, it was just that from the impact his face was twice the size as normal. We fixed him up the best we could. He says, 'I want to thank you,' he says, 'that's him. But it don't look like him.' We worked from a picture.

"The hereafter? Yes. I feel that when I get up there I'm gonna see all my friends and relatives and everything, and we're gonna have a helluva time. I really do. Before I go to sleep at night I pray and thank the Lord for giving me another year. And I've done good. From a little place down there where we never broke a hundred cases a year, and we moved in here. The first year we did two hundred and six. It's fallen down a little bit because a lot of people are going through the Cremation Society. And the AIDS cases have dropped quite a few too, because they're living longer.

"Most of your cemeteries are all full now. Take Saint Boniface, on Lawrence and Clark, that's full. Saint Henry's, on Ridge, it's full. The only burials they have are the ones that own the lots. Saint Joseph is full. That's where my grandparents and parents are. I've got my name on the stone already. When my mom died, my dad remarried, and his second wife wouldn't bury him there—she wanted him next to her family at Saint Boniface. So I asked if I could have that grave. It'll be double interment. Whoever dies first, my wife or I, they go down eight foot, and then the other one will be put on top. There was another grave on the other side of my mom, and my brother died very suddenly. I'd asked him if he would like that grave, and he said he would.

"I don't fear death. No. In this business, a couple of times I've shaken hands with a man coming out of church, and I get home and I get a call, 'Mr. So-and-so died.' I just saw him a little while ago—I shook hands with him at the church.' 'Yeah, he's gone. He come home, into the house,

and down he went.' It's all over with. My wife and I both have the living will. We don't want to be hooked up. I've seen so many people come in where the body is rotting already, but they keep 'em going with the machines. I think that's so wrong. They're rotting before the heart stops, put it that way.

"I took over in 1957, in March, and my mom died in '58. We were all laughing and joking, she'd baby-sat for my children the night before, and the next day she was gone. I had taken out a baby to be buried, and I got home and my dad called and he says, 'Come over quick, something happened to your mother.' She had diabetes bad and she went into a diabetic coma. We got her an ambulance, got her over to Masonic, and in an hour and twenty minutes she was gone. She was only fifty-one. And then I lost a sister in '53. She had cancer of the throat, esophagus. I lost my brother, the baby of the family. We just buried him two years ago. He was sixty-five. I'll be seventy in December, and I was glad to get out of my fifties. My grandmother I think was fifty-two when she died. My mom, I had my friend do because I just couldn't handle it. My sister that died of cancer, I used to go every week to talk to her. She was at home. She was resigned that she was gonna die, and she said, 'Bill, I want you to promise me that you'll embalm me. I know your work is beautiful.' She, too, had lost a lot of weight. I says, 'Oh, Cheryle, that's a big promise.' She says, 'Bill, please do it.' And I did. I embalmed her. In fact, all the rest of my family I took care of. My mother I couldn't handle. All my aunts and uncles ... they didn't bother me as much as my own siblings. That's where it gets a little sticky, when you have to do your own family. It's kind of hard.

"I want my son to do it for me. Like with my sister, he said, 'You're asking a lot of me, Dad.' I said, 'I know, but I respect your work.' Everybody that comes in there that he's taken care of, the family says, 'Oh, your son, he did a beautiful job. My mom looks so nice.' A lot of these boys that died from AIDS, sometimes they wither away to just about nothing. I go and rebuild them from a picture. I use silicone. People come in, especially their partner, and they say, 'Oh, that's how he looked before he got sick. Thank you, thank you.' That's what makes you feel good. Joe is the same way. He goes out of his way to try and get that likeness again. I've been to some funeral homes, they don't take the trouble. Where the coat was like this, careless, I went up and straightened it out. Or if he wore his hair straight back and they've got it parted to the side, I say, 'No, he wore it back, give me a comb.' And the family goes, 'Thank you, thank you. We didn't want to say nothin'.' They were afraid to say anything.

"I buried two of the boys that were found under Gacy's house.* One, the funeral directors all got together. I had six funeral directors for pallbearers. There were no outsiders. I

*John Wayne Gacy, the murderer of dozens of young men, whom he buried under and around his house.

was so proud of the Funeral Directors Association that time. I think there was thirteen or fourteen unclaimed bodies. The cemeteries donated the plot, and the monument dealers donated a stone. The one I had went to Irving Park Cemetery, and the stone read ONLY KNOWN BY GOD ALONE.

"They all went out of here fully dressed and most of them in tuxedos. When the tuxedo went out of style, a friend brought me in a whole carload of them. So when they had nothing, indigent, veterans that we got out of the TB sanatorium or the VA hospital, they would send them over to me and I would bury them for Veterans' and Social Security. Whatever I got, that's all I got. I put them all in tuxedos. People would say, 'I thought he was penniless, I didn't think he had any money.' I said, 'I took care of it.' I gave him suit, shirt, tie, underwear, everything. They went out first class."

MAMIE MOBLEY

A retired Chicago public school teacher. In 1955 her fourteen-year-old son, Emmett Till, was killed while visiting relatives in Mississippi. He was her only child. Two white men, Roy Bryant and J.W. "Big" Milam, were accused of the murder. Though the evidence against them was overwhelming, they were acquitted by an all-white jury. The case had international repercussions and is still considered a significant prelude to the civil-rights movement. This conversation took place in September of 2000, forty-five years later.

"E mmett just barely got on that train to Mississippi. We could hear the whistle blowing. As he was running up the steps, I said, 'Bo,'—that's what I called him—'you didn't kiss me. How do I know I'll ever see you again?' He turned around and said, 'Oh, Mama.' Gently scolding me. He ran down those steps and gave me a kiss. As he turned to go up the steps again, he pulled his watch off and said, 'Take this, I won't need it.' I said, 'What about your ring?' He was wearing his father's ring for the first time. He said, 'I'm going to show this to my friends.' That's how we were able to identify him, by that ring. I think it was a Mason's ring.

"I got four letters from him in a week's time. My aunt in Mississippi wrote me a long letter in praise of him. How he helped her in her kitchen, with the washing machine, preparing the meals. The way he did things at home. He'd say, 'Mama, if you can go out and make the money, I can take care of the house.' He cleaned, he shopped for groceries, he washed. Do you remember when Tide came out? It was in 1953, two years before he went to Mississippi. He told me about the advertisement: 'Tide's in, dirt's out.' All the neighbors knew him.

"I didn't know what happened to him until the following Sunday.

"I'm a seventy-eight-year-old woman. I have lived all my life being brought up in the church. I feel that I'm a very

strong woman. When I lost my son, that's when I found out that I really had two feet and I *had* to stand on my own feet. I had to stand and be a woman.

"There was nobody around who could really help me. Everybody was so in tears. I had to calm them down. They couldn't help me if they were going to be hollering and screaming. So I found out, in 1955, that I was very capable of getting the job done, even though I couldn't see for the tears.

"I was able to get it done.

"The spirit spoke to me and said, 'Go to school and be a teacher. I have taken one, but I shall give you thousands.' I have to identify that as a spirit being bigger than I am. I was the only one hearing that voice.

"I had ordered Emmett's body brought back to Chicago. It was in three boxes. He was in a box that was in a box that was in a box. Each had the Mississippi seal and a padlock on it. It was the biggest box I'd ever seen in my life.

"I said to the undertaker, 'Give me a hammer. I'm gonna break that seal. I'm gonna go into that box. I don't know what I'm burying. It could be a box full of rocks. It could be cement. It could be dirt. I've got to verify it is my son in that box.'

"They had laid him out on the cooling board. His body was still in the body bag. [*She has difficulty, weeps. A long pause.*] The undertaker unzipped the bag. And that's when I saw all that lime. They hosed him down. And, oh, my God, I knew what that odor was by then. It was not the lime. That was my son I was smelling.

"I glanced at his head and it was such a mess up there, I just had to turn away. I started at his feet. I knew certain characteristics about him. I knew how his knees looked. I knew how his ankles and feet looked. I made my trip from his feet up to his midsection, identifying what I could.

"And then I saw this long tongue hanging out of his mouth. What on earth? They were looking for me to fall out, and I told them, 'Turn me loose. I've got a job to do.' I said, 'I can't faint now.' I began a real minute examination. I looked at his teeth, and there were only about four of them left. He had such beautiful teeth. I moved on up to the nose. And it looked like somebody had taken a meat cleaver and had just chopped the bridge of his nose. Pieces had fallen out. When I went to look at his eyes, this one was lying on his cheek. But I saw the color of it. I said, 'That's my son's eye.' I looked over at the other and it was as if somebody had taken a nut picker and just picked it out. There was no eye. I went to examine his ears. If you'll notice, my ears are detached from my face and they kind of curl on the end. And his did too. There was no ear. It was gone. I was looking up the side of his face and I could see daylight on the other side. I said, 'Oh, my God.' The tears were falling and I was brushing tears away because I had to see.

"Later, I was reading the Scriptures. And it told how Jesus had been led from judgment hall to judgment hall all night

long. How he had been beaten. And so much that no man would ever sustain the horror of his beating. That his face was just in ribbons. And I thought about it and I said, 'Lord, do you mean to tell me that Emmett's beating did not equal the one that was given to Jesus?' And I said, 'My God, what must Jesus have suffered?'

"And then I thought about some of the pictures we see, where he had this neat little crown of thorns and you see a few rivulets of blood coming down. But his face is intact. And according to Scriptures, that is not true. His visage was scarred more than any other man's had ever been or will be.

"And that's when I really was able to assess what Jesus had given for us, the love he had for us.

"And I saw Emmett and his scars. Lord, I saw the stig-

mata of Jesus. The spirit spoke to me plainly as I'm talking to you now. Jesus had come and died that we might have a right to eternal life or eternal hell or damnation. Emmett had died that men might have freedom here on earth. That we might have a right to life.

"That was my darkest moment, when I realized that that huge box had the remains of my son. I sent a very lovable boy on a vacation. Emmett, who knew everybody in the neighborhood. They'd call him whenever they wanted something done. 'Mom, I gotta go help Mrs. Bailey.' He was the block's messenger boy.

"What might have been? He's never far from my mind. If Jesus Christ died for our sins, Emmett Till bore our prejudices, so ..."

CONCENTRATION

We understand the egg-sized ship,
the thread-and-spindle masts, the parchment sails
puffed to a rigid billow.

And the light bulb that enfolds it.

We understand the man, Graham Leach, his passion for
impossibles. We see him,
tucked within the vapor of his jasmine tea,

while heron-toed forceps slowly wed

a deckhand to a tear of glue.

The rudder would lodge in the bulb's slim throat
but could be folded, slipped inside, reopened

into seamlessness. We understand that sleight of hand

but not this full-size pocket watch
upright in a 30-watt. Perhaps it's made of lesser stuff
than gold, some nonmetallic pliancy. Still,

it mirrors the museum shelf, and to the left

the plump barque, static in its perfect globe.
Perhaps he blew a gaping bulb
and then tucked the watch inside, re-warmed the glass,

drew out a path, clamped one end's concentric rings,

the contact point's dark star. This would explain
what we've attributed to time
and now must give to fire: the amber face,

the wrinkled Roman numerals—

still fixed, still spaced to mark the intervals
of space, but rippled,
a dozen ashless filaments. The filament

itself is gone. Gold's light enough, perhaps.

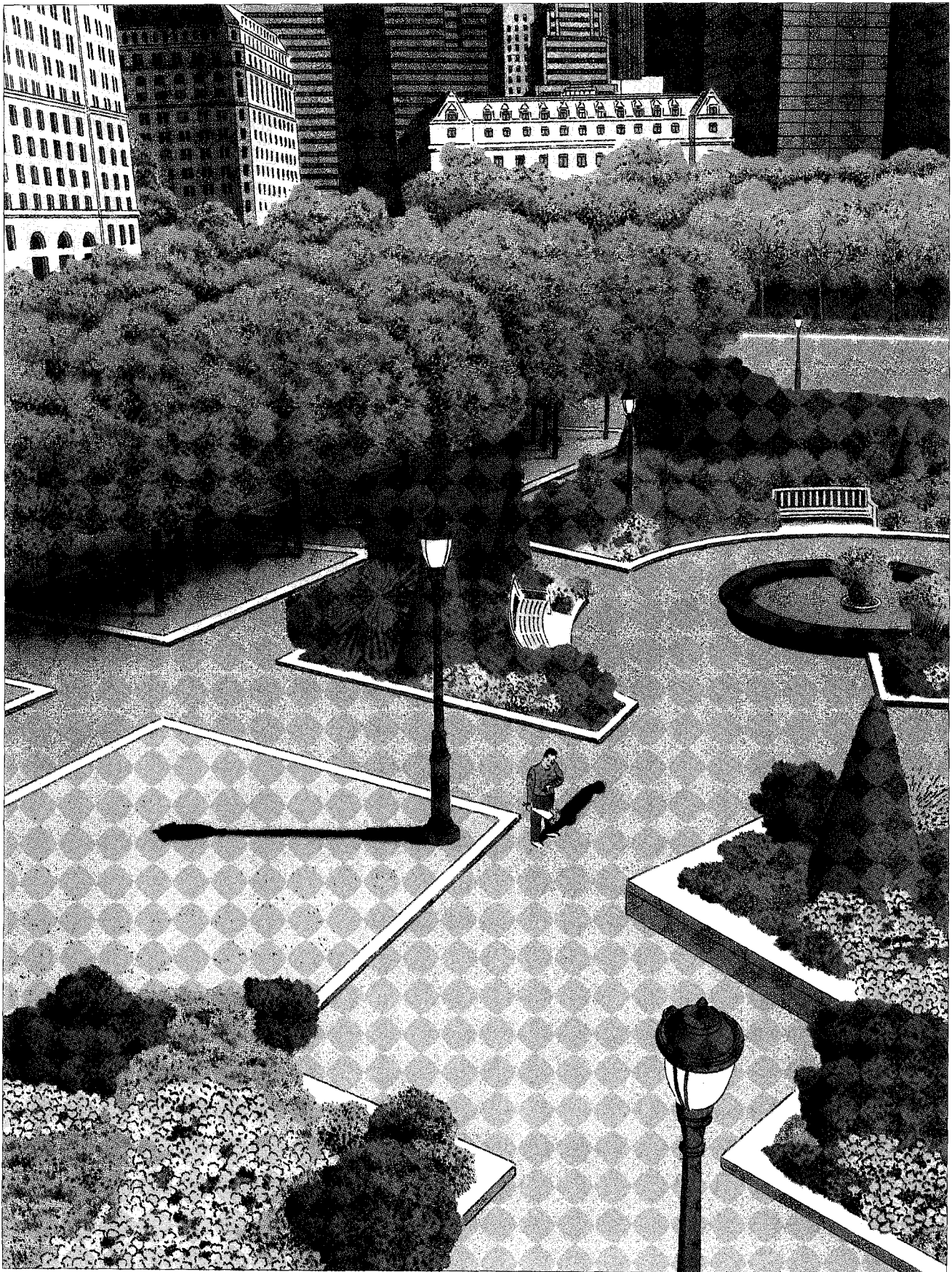
We understand, to make a living bulb,
three hundred wicks were tried. Before a match was found.
Oakum, fishline, flax, plumbago. A coconut's

starched hair. A sprig of human beard.

Three hundred tries, before some agent, tucked
within a vacuum globe, could catch the rasp
outside—that friction-fed, pervasive tick—

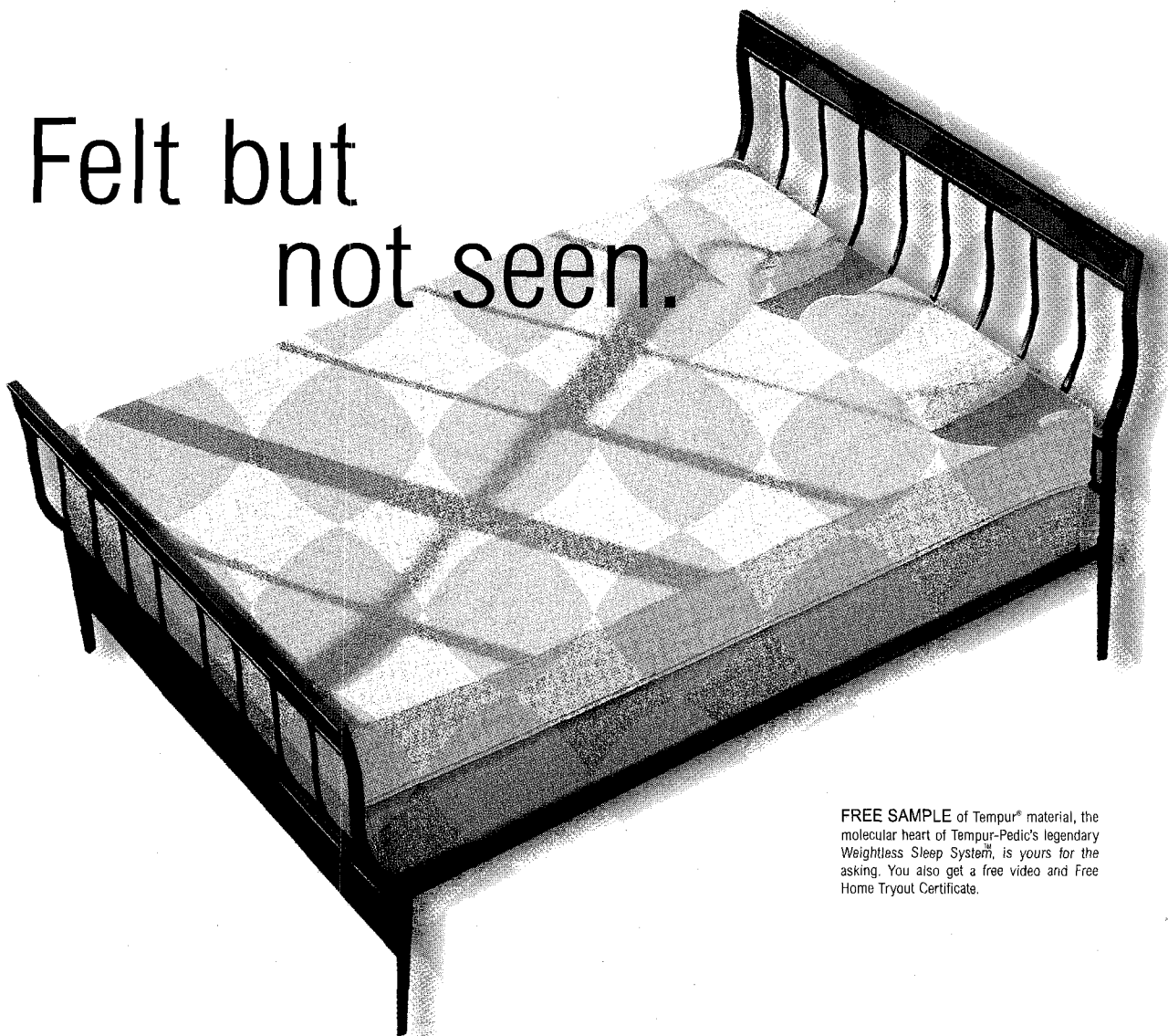
and channel it, and draw it in.

—LINDA BIERDS



RENDEZVOUS *by Guy Billout*

Felt but not seen.



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POPULAR GIRLS

A short story

BY KAREN SHEPARD

Illustrations by Istvan Banyai

.....

You know who we are. We're Kaethe and Alina, CJ and Sydney. Stephanie. Our hair is blonde or brown or black. Rarely red, rarely curly. It's thick and straight, and falls back into place after we run our fingers through it and hold it away from our faces long enough for you to see our striking eyes. When we do this, you get shivers.

It's 1982, and we sit on the benches lining our New York private school's entrance, after classes are over and before we head home. They are old church pews, and we are from another world. Our canvas book bags mass at our feet. They're from Sweden. They come with an excess of zippers, a plastic ID tag on a small chain, and a ruler that we never use. We buy them at Chocolate Soup, on Madison, the store for cool kids. We say things like "Tenth grade is the Howard Johnson's of school life."

You can sit on these benches too, but we do not notice you. Last fall we excised some of you from our group by taking you aside five minutes before chapel and saying "It just isn't working out."

We see everyone who walks past us, in and out of our 200-year-old originally Episcopalian school. We sweep you with our eyes as if you were a landscape. We've seen everything the world has to offer, and we've dismissed it.

We lean back in the pews, our heads against the brick wall, our feet planted widely in front of us if we are wearing jeans—worn jeans that we say we've had since we were ten. If we're wearing miniskirts, we cross our long legs and tuck one foot behind the other calf, like CJ told us she once saw Anne Sexton do in a photo. We are weary. Our day was long.

Our book bags spill into the corridor in front of us. They are our moat. We reach into them to refold twenties into our Coach leather wallets, to idly rearrange a silk sweater that matches our socks, to lift and complain about that bio textbook. We mention the biology teacher's name and flutter our lashes, holding our hands over our hearts. We also discuss the theater teacher. And that one English teacher.

We have breasts. When we stretch and yawn, we arch our



backs, and our buttons strain. You can see bits of our Lily of France bras. We have seen the theater teacher looking at them. We are not shocked. We are not surprised. We wear them in mocha and black, dark purple and fuchsia. They are sheer and iridescent. If we are not careful, our fingernails snag on them. We don't let boys take them off. We take them off ourselves.

We listen to the tribulations of other girls' boyfriends. The boys muse about affairs. We suggest ourselves. We hold other girls' boyfriends' hands and write in our diaries, "Bingo!" We cross out the ex-girlfriends' pictures in the yearbook with a blue ballpoint pen.

We talk to senior boys on our private phones for three hours a night. We talk about girls' sexual limits. They tell us that the first time should be with an older, more experienced person. We lie under our Charlie Brown bedspreads, hug our pillows, and agree.

Some of us are virgins and some of us are not. Rumors have floated about some of us giving blowjobs in the wrestling room. Kaethe, people say, slept with Treat Williams.

Some boys we are friends with, and some boys we date. There's rarely any crossover. The boys we're friends with—Andy and Greg, Hunter and Miles—can join us on the pews. They sit outside the moat, on the carpeted floor, leaning forward to look at us, or leaning back on their hands. We talk about last weekend, or this one. It is always Friday, in April. We talk about who has passes to Studio or Xenon. An Ivy League party at Limelight tonight. The boys hold up postcard invitations and ask if we're going. We take their postcards and make no promises. We turn to one another and talk about meeting at this bar or that one. We have fake IDs from the fake-ID place on Eighth Street. They say we go to Vassar, NYU, Columbia. We stopped going to Dublin House a year ago; that's for ninth-graders. We drink on the Upper East Side, at Dorian's or Fitzgeralds or JG Mellon's. We know the managers. The bartenders give us free drinks. If we go to the West Side, we go to Nanny Rose—crayons

on the table and ice-cream drinks that make our teeth ache. We pass out in the bathroom, forgotten until we're remembered and brought back to the group.

We chew gum in school. On the sidewalk around the corner, out of sight of Mr. Bleakley, the upper-school principal, we smoke cigarettes. Virginia Slims. Lights. Some of us smoke Gitanes—well, just CJ. If Mr. Bleakley catches us, we can flirt with him until he lets us go with a warning. Stephanie touches him on the arm. Alina leans in close to let him smell her. We love warnings.

You can't get enough of us. You've seen girls like us every step of the way through school. We're way out of your league.

We walk in the formation of migrating geese. Stephanie is at the head, with Sydney and Alina on her left and right, Kaethe and CJ last. Only Kaethe cares that she's last. We haven't figured out what CJ cares about; we don't spend much brain time on the subject.

Stephanie cares that she's first. She's the tallest. She was the first to wear boot-cut acid-dyed jeans. Her mother, aunt, grandmother, and great-grandmother were all ballerinas. She danced for the New York City Ballet. She was in *The Nutcracker* when she was eight and nine. She gave up ballet at thirteen. Her mom was pissed. Stephanie says she's going to be a fashion designer. In her Swedish book bag she carries an artist's sketchbook and colored pencils. Sometimes she just peels back the cover of her book and starts working on her fall line. She designs her company logo. She says with a slow sweep of her arm that when we grow up, she will dress us all. Her father lives in a castle. Her grandmother was the Queen of Holland, or something like that.

We live on Eighty-ninth and Park, and Sixty-sixth off Fifth, and Sutton Place, in penthouses and duplexes and townhouses. We rollerskate in parquet hallways and throw water balloons from roof gardens tended by Japanese men whose names we don't know. We get stoned in walk-in closets organized by color and in guest rooms we've never seen used. We make our Sassoon jeans fit just right by putting them on and soaking in tubs filled with warm water in mirrored bathrooms.

To school we wear sweater vests from Benetton in maroon and forest and bright pink over men's white T-shirts. Sometimes bandanas around our necks. Our socks match our vests. We wear wool side-zip tapered-ankle trousers in yellow and purple and red from Fiorucci, or dyed painter's pants from Reminiscence. We wear boys' black penny loafers with dimes in them, or black suede booties that make us look like we're from Sherwood Forest. We wear black-metal band watches that are slightly oversized. They slide up and down our forearms like bracelets.

We wear some makeup—Sydney wears the most, and she was the first to use lip liner—but we are naturally radiant without it. Men look at us when we walk by. Crown men. Men with jobs and wives and children not much younger than we are.

On weekends our clothes get shorter and tighter. Lycra is involved. For fancy occasions Ungaro, Versace, Armani, or small French designers that only the French have heard of. Those of us who can't afford to keep buying Versace dry-clean the outfits and return them.

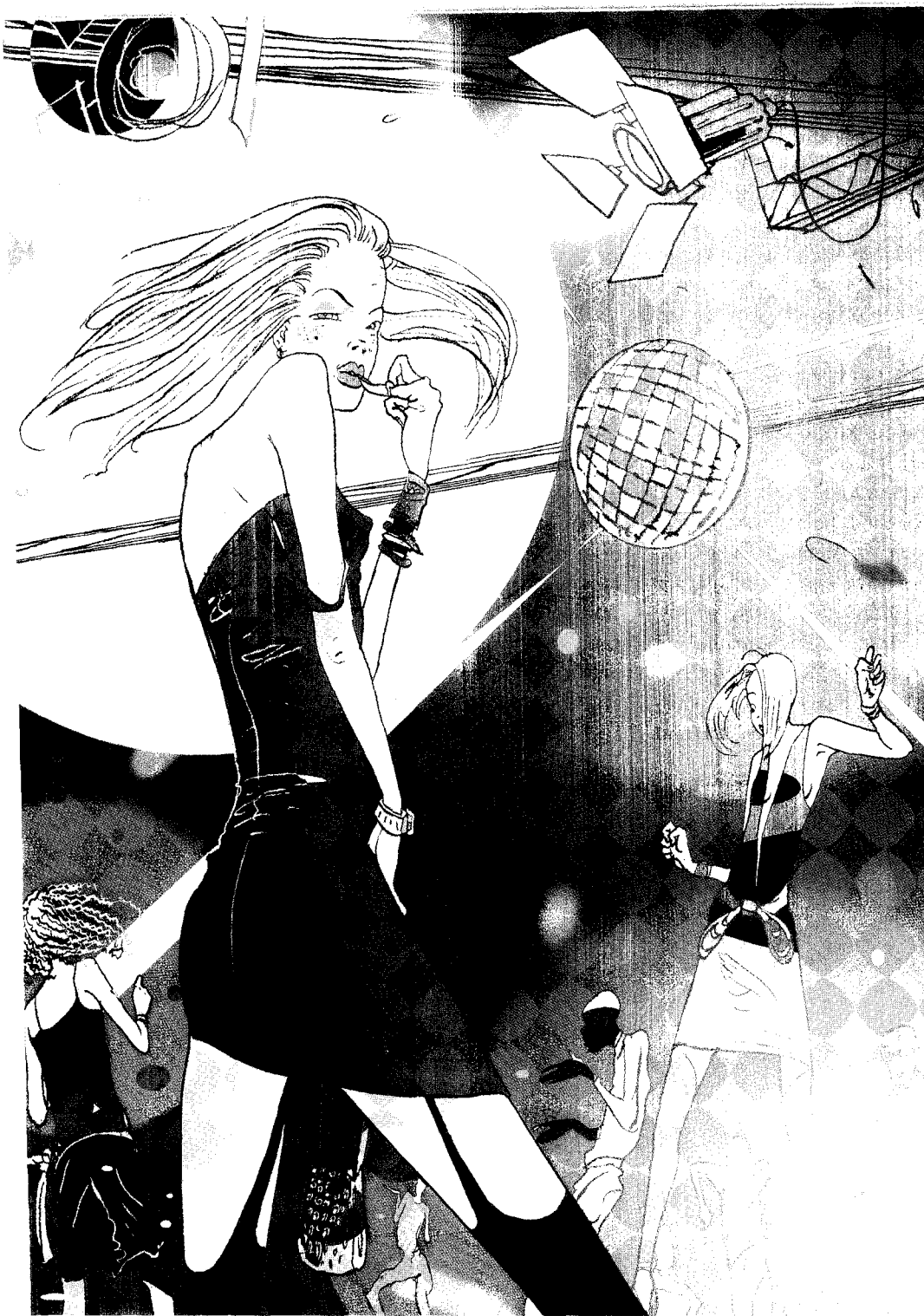
A certain Cartier ring is a must, according to Stephanie, whose father buys only from Cartier. Three interlocking bands of three different kinds of gold: yellow, white, and pink. Its name is the name of our school, and we take that as a sign. Stephanie says a lot of knockoffs are on the market. Stephanie says she can tell the difference. Some of us tuck our hands under our thighs.

Our rooms at home are designed by architects and interior decorators famous for their work on small museums and boutique hotels. Our rooms are multi-level and carpeted, with custom-made circular beds—an extra one for sleepovers. Or they are sunken, with marquetry wood floors designed to look like Persian rugs. We have first-generation big-screen TVs and phones in the shape of something else: Mickey Mouse, Elvis, a red Mercedes 280SL. We have cordless stereos the color of steel, Cy Twombly throw pillows, and Steiff stuffed animals: horses and goats and elephants. We have doll collections our fathers add to every time they go to a foreign country, and add-a-pearl necklaces begun by our mothers on our first birthdays. Our glass-animal collections we add to ourselves. Our walls are decorated with Rolling Stones and Police posters and the *New Yorker* cover with New York as the center of the world. If our parents are art collectors, we have child-appropriate Jim Dine prints of hearts or red robes.

Our parents are the presidents of department stores, interior decorators, film directors, investment bankers, psychiatrists, royalty, real-estate developers. Housewives, board volunteers, fundraisers, art collectors, alcoholics, adulterers. Angry, sad, and distant. Or they're Legal Aid lawyers, doctors in Harlem clinics, cancer researchers, cooperative-nursery-school directors. Empathetic, energetic, and loving. They mystify and enrage and enthrall us. Stimulate and bewilder us, frustrate and entertain us. Very rarely they surprise us. Mostly they bore us. We evade them, slipping around corners like cats, not wanting to confront their gifts and legacies. We tell each other they don't know the real us. We worry that even they can see through us.

We tell them we're going to one another's houses for sleepovers, and they know we're lying but they let us go anyway. Have a good time, they say. Don't stay up too late, they say. Okay, we say. We love you, we say. And we do.

This Friday in April, 1982, we are on our way to the Ivy League Limelight party when a limo pulls up alongside us on Park Avenue. Boys are in the limo. Not boys we're friends with, the kind of boys we could date. They are older. Older than college. Old enough for jobs. But we're not curious about what they do. They're drinking



bles the cubes of sugar make. They introduce us to the chauffeur, a young black man to whom we give our small, kind smiles. CJ thinks he's hot. The boys ask where such a beautiful pack of women could be going on such a beautiful night, and we don't reveal how thrilled we are at being called women. We pull the postcard invitations from our sequined evening bags. They read and frown and say, "*S'il vous plait*" and rip our postcards into pieces, and we laugh and open the windows for them and watch the pieces fly away.

We're not on Park Avenue anymore, and we ask them to close the window. And Gilles takes Sydney's hand and kisses her palm, and the rest of us are jealous. "Welcome," these boys say. "Welcome."

They take us to the new club. They're on the list. They know the bouncer. So do we, of course, from another club, another time. They hold their hands to the smalls of our backs, ushering us past the people who have to wait. The club is called Area; it has a long entrance tunnel lined with the equivalent of shop windows. Tonight

is red night, and all the window tableaux have something to do with red. Real people stand in the windows. Beautiful women with bored, superior faces. Alina says she recognizes one of them from a *Seventeen* shoot she did a few months ago. Antoine pulls her dark hair back to get a better look and says he thought he'd recognized her. The rest of us silently swear to give up another two meals a week, to eat raw fruit and vegetables for a month, to get back to 100 or, at the very most, 105.

But we don't like the windows. There is something about them. We walk quickly to get past them into the club, where it is dark and hot and too loud to think.

champagne. They're wearing open-collared shirts in white and blue and lime green to show off their tans. They speak with accents. They are named Gilles and Pablo and Antoine. Only three of them, but who cares? the five of us think, stepping gracefully into their long black car, bending so they can see whatever they want. I will be one of the three, each of us thinks. I will be one of the three they choose, pulling ahead of the other girls like a horse at the wire.

We offer our hands, and they take them, but only to pull us to them, to kiss us on both cheeks. They keep their lips to our faces longer than they should.

The boys mix us Kir Royales, and we giggle at the bub-

We dance to Billy Idol and Modern English, "Mony Mony" and "I Melt With You" and "I Love Rock 'N Roll" and extended dance versions of "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" and Blondie's "Rapture" and anything by The Cars.

We like the dance floor. We dance in groups, letting the boys in, closing them out. Dancing is not about the boys. It's a performance of us, the group of us. Our energy, our happiness. The good things that happen when we come together. We hold our arms above our heads. We swivel our hips. We flip our hair as if we are out of control. We point to one another and smile. Look at you, we are saying. Look at you. We are happy to be together, part of something and not alone, and we celebrate that out loud.

Off the dance floor are the bar and the bathroom. At the bar we drink Tanqueray and tonics or Melon Balls or Cape Codders, and thwart unwanted advances by putting our arms around one another and standing tall. "Sorry," we say. "We're together." If a boy hangs around, we ignore him and drop our voices to say, "What a dork," "What a loser." CJ likes more theatrical dialogue: "You are so hot," she'll whisper in Kaethe's ear. "I want to lick you all over." Certain guys go for CJ.

In the bathroom we pee quickly and stand at the mirror in a row, brushing and talking and dabbing and talking. If we do cocaine in one of the stalls, we go in by twos, using that cool little bullet of CJ's that's clear acrylic and looks like it should be in the design section of MOMA. We compare this week's to last's, reflecting on the sordidness of our dealers. Our dealers are not real dealers. They're private school boys whom real dealers use to get to us. We also do speed. CJ does shrooms. Occasionally we get stoned, but we agree that we were pretty much over the pot thing by the end of seventh grade. We're tenth-graders. It's all about getting through the whole thing as fast as possible. Who wants to go through tenth grade in real time?

CJ collapses on the red-velvet divan in the ladies' room. Hey, she says. I don't feel so good.

We gather round. Her skin is pale, but her skin is always pale. She has rings under her eyes. Her eyes freak us out. They are shiny—too shiny to be a sign of anything good.

She holds her head. She lists to the left. She hangs her head between her knees. She lifts it.

"You're crying," we say, pointing.

"I am?" she says, reaching to her face.

Sydney takes over. Sydney says she's going to be a doctor. Sydney's father is a heart surgeon. She kneels by CJ and feels for a pulse. She looks closely at CJ's face. She stands up and turns to us. "She's really cold," Sydney says. We nod.

The door opens. It's Pablo, wanting to know what's up. We fill him in. He comes over to the divan, and we glance around, disconcerted. A boy is in the girls' bathroom.

He says she probably ate or drank something bad. We

nod. He'll take her back to their place and keep an eye on her. He has her on her feet and walking before we say anything. We follow them out. We ask CJ if this is okay. She seems to nod, and rests her head on Pablo's shoulder. He slides his hand up her back beneath her shirt, unhooks her bra with one hand, and reaches around to cup her breast. It's almost gentle.

We don't walk them out. We tell her we'll hold her bag. We tell her we'll call her later. Kaethe remembers that CJ said Pablo was gross.

That leaves four of us. It's three in the morning. The crowd is thinning. Some people are heading to the late nightclubs. Others stare dumbly, trying to figure out how to get home.

We dance until the lights come on, revealing a dance floor of spilled drinks and dropped coat checks, glasses holding triangles of lemon and lime. In a corner an empty condom packet. Atop one of the speakers a lipstick and a compact mirror. On another a naked man with a ponytail is dancing even though the music has stopped. Very nice, we say, frowning and taking the arms of our men.

At their loft apartment—one vast rectangle—CJ is better. She's pouring upside-down margaritas into Pablo's mouth. We must, she says, holding the tequila and the triple sec to her chest, do two of these to be allowed in.

We take turns, in a black-metal chair that looks like it came from Rent-A-Center, tilting our heads back for CJ to pour. Alina gags on her first and spits it all over Antoine. We laugh. Stephanie is a pro. Sydney and Gilles are already on the couch. He accordions her miniskirt and rubs the skin beneath the elastic of her underwear.

We notice the three beds. There are five of us, three of them. With these boys there will be consecutive sex, or two-on-ones, or more-than-two-on-ones. Whatever happens will be performed in front of the group. We ask ourselves whether we can actually do this; we imagine how we will step out of our clothes gracefully. We are uneasy. Nothing about this whole thing will be graceful. No one is leaving.

It's five in the morning by now. In our homes our parents who love us are still sleeping. Our younger brothers and sisters, who think we're way cool but who tease us mercilessly, have kicked off their covers and are murmuring in their dreams. Our dogs have their tails curled over their twitching noses; our cats are prowling the kitchens. Our goldfish named Snoopy and Linus are floating in their bowls. And there we are, in our beds too. Wearing our all-cotton pajamas, sleeping the sleep of the innocent, the young, the entitled. Our arms are flung above our heads; our legs are hanging uncovered off the side of the bed. It doesn't matter. There we are. So here in this apartment, with three men whose last names we don't know, it doesn't matter what happens. We're loved. We're protected. Do with us what you dare. Do with us what you can. ▀

ASK DAVE ABOUT TIC-TAC-TOE

Play fair, for heaven's sake

BY D. ELLIS DICKERSON

.....

Dear Dave:
My wife and I are big fans of tic-tac-toe, and we try to play it whenever we're not too tired after work. The problem is, whenever she goes first, she places an X in the center square. This makes it very hard for me to employ a winning strategy. Do you have any suggestions?

—Frustrated in Poughkeepsie



familiar with the game, only in her country it was called "naughts and crosses." Is this really the same game? Can I play it with her?

—Curious in Poughkeepsie

Dear Curious:

Although technically nothing prevents you from playing your pen pal, I advise against it. You cannot afford to expose yourself to foreign styles of play if you want to maintain your competitive edge. But deeper philosophical issues are at stake here. Can you *play* tic-tac-toe with an opponent who thinks she's playing something called "naughts and crosses"? Can you have a "tied," or "cats," game if she thinks she's "got you up the crumpet," or whatever those people say? The British unwillingness to compromise on these issues explains why the National Tic-Tac-Toe Federation is not the *International* Tic-Tac-Toe Federation.

Dear Frustrated:

I get this question a lot. Opening with the center square every single time is the mark of an immature player, and a practice that the National Tic-Tac-Toe Federation officially frowns on. If you think about it, avoiding the center-square opening gives you eight more squares to choose from! That's far more than a limited, goal-oriented player will ever see!

But because your wife's practice isn't illegal, all you can do is persuade her to try something else. I can think of two ways to do this.

1.) *Suggestion.* When your wife has finished drawing the grid, but before she has actually written an X, do what the fast-food industry calls "suggesting a sell," by saying something like "Say! I wonder what would happen if you started in the upper left-hand corner?" or "I bet a middle-right opening would lead to a game full of nail-biting excitement." Keep at it! She may not succumb right away, but after fifty or a hundred times your influence may sink in.

2.) *Negotiation.* This is the most direct approach. Turn your normal tic-tac-toe into a kind of game! When you start your match, say something like "Honey, if you avoid opening in the center square this evening, I will reward you with sex." (Or, if you prefer, "If you open in the center square again, I won't have sex with you.") A strategy like this helped me to beat Lance Carlotti in 1996 and win the National Tic-Tac-Toe Federation's Golden Stickpin, but instead of sex I used threats of leprosy. You can do the same to give your matches life "outside the box."

Dear Dave:

I have a pen pal from England. Recently, when I was telling her about my love of tic-tac-toe, she responded that she was already

Dear Dave:

I play tic-tac-toe every day at lunch with a guy at work. He has this really annoying habit—instead of writing an O he uses a smiley face! It's driving me crazy!! Can you make him stop???

—Frantic in a Town Just South of Poughkeepsie

Dear Frantic:

I think if the game had been meant to be played your friend's way, it would be called tic-tac-smiley-face.

The National Tic-Tac-Toe Federation's official term for this practice is nonstandard orthography, and on the professional circuit it carries a minimum fine of \$25 and forfeiture of the game. The worst case of this I ever saw was at the 1989 Nationals, where a contestant, angered by an earlier loss, started replacing all his Xs with a well-known four-letter obscenity. He was fined \$200, stripped naked, and beaten senseless in the parking lot. Although nothing this extreme has happened since (for one thing, the National Convention no longer serves alcohol), the message is clear. If you want to use smiley faces, do it on your own time! That's what hotel rooms are for! The rules of tic-tac-toe are not complicated, and everyone must abide by them. If you can't bring yourself to do this, perhaps you should be playing nine-men's-morris. ♠

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD

Eight Atlantic contributors share their idiosyncratic but passionately held opinions

.....

WIDE OPEN SPACES, USA

For me, the place is a sweeping expanse of country, newly discovered and promise-filled—an American vista. It's both a real place and an imaginary one. In its imaginary form it's ubiqui-



tous, even clichéd. You find it in nineteenth-century American landscape paintings, and in mountain scenes air-brushed on the sides of vans, and in the description of the first explorers seeing the New World in the last pages of *The Great Gatsby*, and (most famously) at the end of western movies. That landscape in which the hero rides off toward the sunset is mesmerizing to me. When a movie ends that way, I watch it clear to the last syllable of the credits. I believe I could watch an entire movie consisting of nothing but that scene.

When I see an American vista in reality, I am sometimes moved to exaltation. I put one such moment in my book *Great Plains*, where I described coming out of the Rocky Mountains in

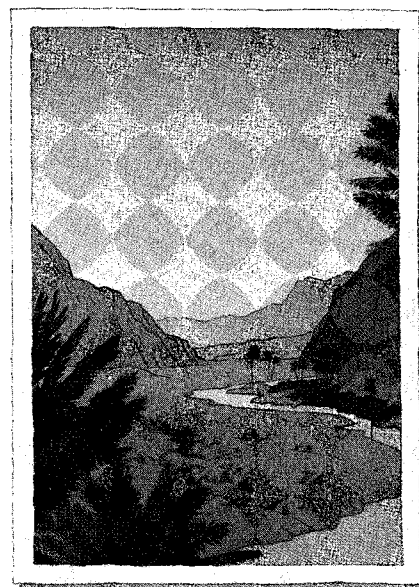
Montana and seeing the prairie stretching away for a hundred miles. Vistas have surprised me on Mulholland Drive, high above the lights of Los Angeles; in the field by the bridge in Concord, Massachusetts, where the colonists fired the shot heard round the world; and on the balcony of a hotel room in Salt Lake City, where a busy avenue below dwindled to the horizon like a vision in Brigham Young's mind.

My most recent vista experience was in Hannibal, Missouri. I had gone there with my wife and kids to see Mark Twain's boyhood home, and we did that, and then we walked over to the riverbank where steamboats docked in Twain's time. The Hannibal riverfront is a long, straight expanse of high bank, ideal for setting a gangplank on. Below, the river runs deep and slow. A historical marker on the site says that more than a thousand steamboats docked there in 1847. It does not add that Twain was twelve years old that year. I turned from the marker and looked downriver, where the Mississippi spread out milky-brown and gleaming between the far-apart sketch lines of its shores. A thrilling familiarity miles beyond the cliché rolled over me, and I stood fixed in place, part of this basic American vista, and completely glad. —IAN FRAZIER

THE KARAKORAM HIGHWAY, THE CONGO RIVER, THE DRÂA VALLEY

It is now a commonplace to say that there are no more remote corners of the globe—that the unexplored regions medieval cartographers once covered with paintings of dragons and sea monsters have all been mapped and equipped with airports, and even with Web sites. This is only partly true. There are still places that, either by some accident of geography or more probably because of war, are difficult or dangerous to reach. I nominate three such places as among the world's most beautiful.

The first is the terrain surrounding the Karakoram Highway, in northernmost Pakistan, between the Khunjerab Pass and the town of Hunza. There the summit of Rakaposhi, at 25,551 feet, trailed by an eternal plume of blowing snow, dominates lush, glacier-watered valleys where ibex and yaks graze and slate-gray cliffs where snow leopards hunt. As if all this weren't enough to marvel at, a deep breath at such altitudes splits the lungs and dizzies the head,



ILLUSTRATIONS BY YAN NASCIMBENE

imbuing visitors with an immediate and intoxicating sense of wonder. The second place is the 300-mile stretch of the Congo River between the towns of Mbandaka (on the Equator) and Lisala. There the jungle, a forest of teaks and palms, rubber trees and bombaxes, tumbles down to the river, whose water at sunset quivers as if it were aflame. The third place I nominate, the Drâa Valley of the Moroccan Sahara, once nearly took my life, when a fierce sandstorm buried the dirt track I was following back to civilization. In the Drâa storied casbahs of ochreous clay rise above oases of palms hung with golden dates. Once upon a time caravans laden with slaves and gold arrived there from Timbuktu, on their way across the Sahara. For me, the very idea of this route brings on a shiver. The beauty of the desert is a lethal one. —JEFFREY TAYLER

PRINCESS LOUISA INLET, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The exact location of terrestrial paradise is 50.2°N, 123.8°W—or that's where it was in the summer of 1975, when my parents took my brother and sisters and me on a cruise up the channel between Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia. Such a trip was not as difficult or expensive for my family as it would be for most people, because my parents then owned a small marina in Seattle. What was hard, I suspect, was convincing four teenagers that they should travel 200 miles from their favorite glam-rock radio stations.

The straits begin at Vancouver, a terrific city that, confusingly, is on the mainland and not on Vancouver Island. North of the city the Coast Mountains climb 8,000 feet up from the shore. Between the peaks are steep, crooked valleys that would be filled with Douglas firs if the mountains didn't stick into the ocean; the valleys are filled with seawater instead. People thereabouts can drive boats through the mountains for a considerable distance, which is what our family did that summer.

Jervis Inlet begins about halfway up the channel and zigzags seventy miles inland. Its course is miles wide and choppy sea-gray at first, but later on the passage narrows and the water turns to



soft blue ripples. At the very end of Jervis Inlet is Princess Louisa Inlet, the most beautiful place on earth. For many years its sole inhabitant was a wealthy prospector named James MacDonald, who had first shown up there in 1919. He built a house on the inlet but became so disturbed by the thought of further development that after his house was destroyed by fire, in 1940, he didn't have the heart to rebuild.

The entrance to Princess Louisa is guarded by a set of what would be called rapids if this weren't the ocean. Inside is a faultlessly executed cut in the planet: a gorge five miles long and half a mile wide and a thousand feet deep and just amazingly still. Dozens of skinny waterfalls bounce down the cliffs and through the trees. Frilly oysters line the water's edge like crinoline showing at the hem of a skirt, and the sky is a pale, narrow slice of blue above the walls. At the far end of the inlet Chatterbox Falls drops more than a hundred feet onto a stone table and noisily kicks up a mist that is always filled with prism colors.

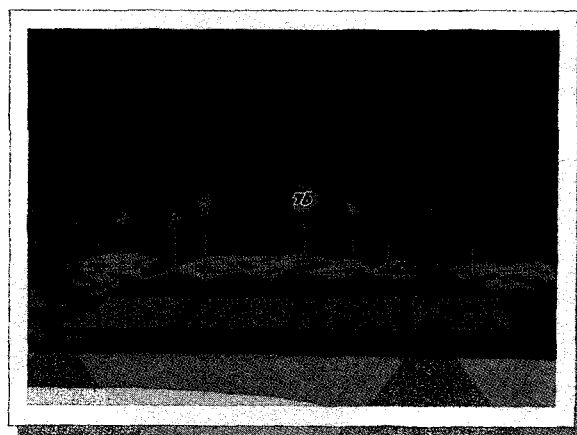
Blue sky and sea, vertical ramparts, roar of tumbling water—MacDonald couldn't get the place out of his mind. He bought the best part of it eight years after his first visit, and managed to make it into

a park before he died. To this day Princess Louisa Inlet can be reached only by boat or seaplane.

When we visited, either nobody else was there (my sister's memory) or just one other boat was (my memory). In orthodox romantic fashion the northwestern drizzle stopped just as we passed the rapids. Late in the afternoon we pried a bucketful of oysters from the wall and beached our dinghy by the ruins of MacDonald's cabin. We slurped the oysters down with the juice of lemons my mother had brought from Seattle. Nicking oysters is probably illegal now, and rightly so. But they were cool and briny sweet—delicious, even to adolescents. I remember, too, the tiny raindrops glistening in our hair as the clouds peeled away for sunset, and how for just a little while we kids stopped trying to get some glam rock on the radio. —CHARLES C. MANN

DODGER STADIUM, LOS ANGELES

Dodger Stadium is best from its cheapest seats. From there, at the rim of the Chavez Ravine, the players are too small to distract you from the view of the green-and-gold Elysian Hills, fading to blue in the sunset. What makes this vista beguiling makes Los Angeles as a whole winning: whimsical artificiality set against natural grandeur. A straight line of tall, absurdly skinny palms strings across the closest ridge, and a soda-pop-orange Union 76 ball appears to float among them—magically, a scene charming rather than vulgar. Seemingly just beyond these trees, and beyond the Police Academy's idyllic Spanish-style, eucalyptus-laced campus, loom the San



Gabriel Mountains, among the most abruptly rising in the world and sometimes still snowcapped on opening day. In the other direction, out past the Dodger Dog stand, the whole of downtown, Art Deco to postmodern, appears smack at eye level, behind a grove of ficus trees, with their dense, vibrant-green, broccoli-like crowns. Some people hate Los Angeles because they perceive it to be artificial, but perched at the top of Dodger Stadium, you can see the city's art. L.A. has taken nature and made it better. —BENJAMIN AND CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

RÍO VERDE, CHILE

The beauty of Río Verde is partly that it lies so far away. It is a hamlet of clapboard houses near the southern tip of Chile, where the pampas spread west to touch the Pacific, and the Andes subside into the sea. The country there is not quite a wilderness but a cold and windswept grassland of sheep and cattle ranches, vast estancias along the shores of a saltwater sound called Skyring, which stretches into an archipelago of forested majestic mountains. The road leading to Río Verde runs north for fifty miles from Punta Arenas, on the Straits of Magellan, and turns to gravel across rolling ranges where ostriches pick at the ground and gauchos in wide-brimmed hats quietly tend the livestock. The scenery is stark and unforgiving, as befits such an outpost at the end of the world.

Approaching Río Verde, the road follows a deepwater channel to a ferry crossing, where a two-car barge shuttles to a sparsely inhabited island. Overlooking the ferry landing stands a rustic hotel, with a dining room, a

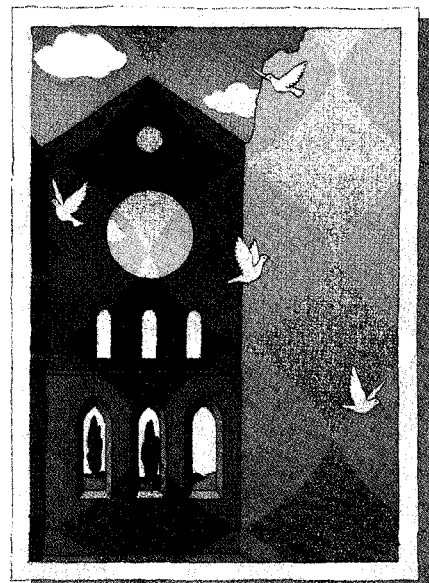
fireplace, and a generator that provides a ration of electric light at night. It is called the Hostería Río Verde, and is open year-round. It has a phone (56-61-311122) and an e-mail address (rioverde@chileaustral.com), though reservations are usually unnecessary, because it also has very few guests.

There is not much to do there. One can walk to the hamlet and drink maté with the gauchos. One can cross to the island and set off on foot for thirty miles down a dirt road along the edge of the magnificent sound, its dark waters torn by the wind and flecked with ice through the long winter season. I don't know if that makes Río Verde the most beautiful place in the world, or even how to measure such a quality. But it's a place I like to revisit, to work and walk in solitude. And it often comes to mind. —WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

SAN GALGANO, ITALY

A few miles southwest of Siena, on a low hill above a plain, Galgano Guidotti, a twelfth-century knight, built himself a hermitage after renouncing the violence and dissolution of his first calling. He died in 1181, at the age of thirty-three, and was canonized four years later by Pope Urban III. Below his lonely hill-top an order of Cistercian monks established an abbey in San Galgano's honor; their Gothic church is said to have inspired the cathedral in Siena. Eventually the abbey was dissolved, and the ruined buildings are today in the keeping of a community of Olivetan nuns.

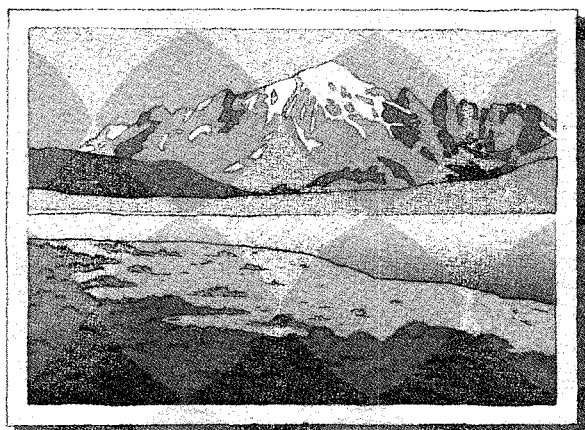
Of all the sacred spaces I have seen, the church at San Galgano is the most beautiful. On a bright morning in early spring tiny white flowers sprinkled the churchyard grass, and freshly planted fields stretched toward the woods and hills beyond. The brick-and-stone walls of the church are intact, but the roof collapsed long ago. Light plunges in from above, picking out planes and curves on the interior arches and casting recesses into blackness. Only the carving on



column capitals and window peaks remains for decoration. Where stained glass may once have lodged, now there is simply air; against a brilliant blue sky on that spring morning the symmetry and detailing of the high windows stood out as they never could have from a dim enclosure. The lower windows framed mutable landscapes ribboned with the colors of the Tuscan countryside—gold, green, mauve, gray-blue. The cooing of pigeons made the church's music; its officiants were sleek cats wandering in shadows on the earthen floor and swallows crisscrossing the nonexistent ceiling. Paint, gilt, marble, and tapestry, packed into the gloomy cavities of whole churches all over the world, seemed in comparison like barriers against the glory to which San Galgano opens wide. —MARTHA SPAULDING

2,000 FEET UP

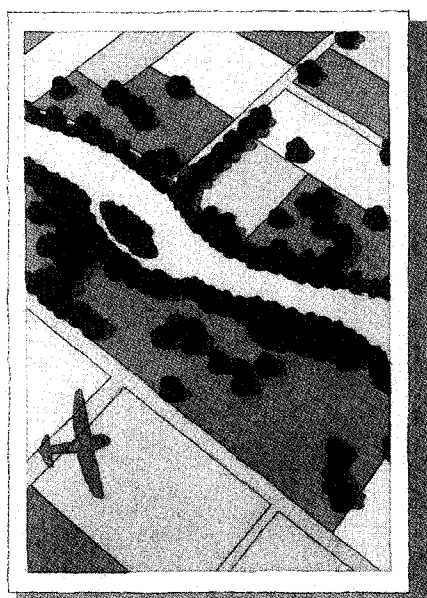
When aviation was new, it was suicidally risky. The memoirs of those who survived, like Beryl Markham and Charles Lindbergh, are filled with references to those who did not, like Amelia Earhart and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. But memoirs from the early days of flying are filled with something else as well: their authors' exhilaration at being among the first to see the world from above. For centuries people had climbed trees and built spires in hopes of glimpsing what birds saw. The best explanation for the popularity and romance of flying in its perilous early years is the thrill



of seeing what Saint-Exupéry famously called "the true face of the earth."

Big modern jets have taken nearly all the danger out of air travel, and nearly all the glamour, too. But small airplanes—much safer than those of Lindbergh's day, though more perilous than the big jets—still offer the view for which early aviators took such risks. Sometimes the low-altitude view through the plane's wide windshield is breathtakingly beautiful: along Puget Sound from Seattle toward the San Juan Islands, for instance, or across San Francisco Bay at night. More often it is fascinating in its connectedness, like the world's most richly featured map. Low-altitude flying has a dreamlike quality, allowing one to zoom in three dimensions toward whatever is interesting.

Once, on a frigid midwinter morning, I set out by myself to fly from Centennial Airport, outside Denver, to southern California. After climbing to



reach and cross the passes in the Rockies, I came to Grand Junction, Colorado—and spent the next ninety minutes following the colorful, elaborately carved canyons of the Upper Colorado River toward Page, Arizona, where I stopped for fuel. What I saw in that hour and a half was like a private version of the Grand Canyon—no roads or buildings visible in any direction, no indication that anyone had previously seen these sights. It was a perspective available only from 2,000 feet up. —JAMES FALLOWS



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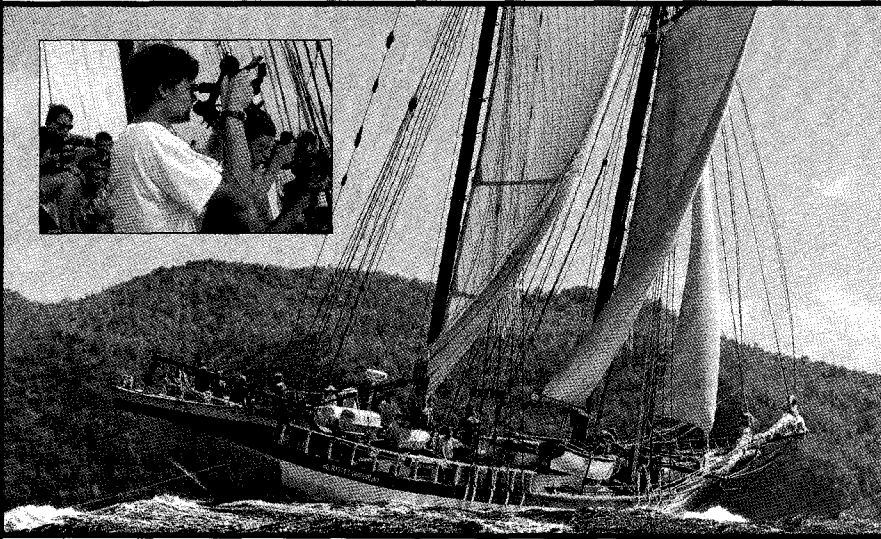
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CIVILITY VS. CIVILITÉ

No matter what the dictionary says, "politeness" and "rudeness" aren't easily translated

BY ALICE FURLAUD

.....

Remember "civility," the watchword of the Bush Administration's early days? This word popped up so often in speeches by the President and members of his circle that it has stuck in my consciousness, inducing me to muse about what it means. President Bush's version, of course, is very American—cowboy civility, a "Hi, y'all!" nicknaming friendliness. But what Europeans mean by civility is something else again. The French version, in particular, is constantly misunderstood on this side of the Atlantic. I should declare an interest here: France is the foreign country I love best, having lived there for twenty-six years.

The French word *civilité* means the same as the English word: "politeness, courtesy." (Another favorite word of Bush's, "compassion," translates unchanged into French, although I suspect it is seldom used in French government circles.) The French have a history of overlaying all kinds of unpleasant activities with the most polished civility. King Louis XIV was good at this: he had exquisite manners, and he forced his mistresses to give birth in salons at Versailles fully dressed and pretending that nothing was happening.

Even now French manners are much more formal than ours. But (our President's politics aside) I can't imagine the French minding Bush's cozier kind of civility. After all, Benjamin Franklin's homespun charm induced royalist France to finance our anti-

royalist Revolution. His simple suits and the fur hat over his wispy, unpowdered gray hair delighted his French friends, themselves all dolled up in embroidered satin coats, swords, and periwigs.

Regrettably, today's Americans don't seem to have inherited Franklin's great love for France. Many of us think the French are terribly rude, without realizing that we often strike French people as deeply uncivilized. "You Americans are all big children!" my French friends were always telling me when I lived there. "*Grands enfants!*" I put it down to our contrasting definitions of civility.

For instance, we address one another in different ways. The very words *Madame* and *Monsieur* seem the essence of civility to me, recently returned to the United States, where a typical salutation is "Hi," and the answer to "How are you?" is likely to be "I'm good." (You are? I'm rather naughty myself.) To the French our hasty, slapdash

way of addressing people seems rude. One aspect of French civility is a measured approach to all transactions, whether with a waiter, a taxi driver, or a shop clerk. There's a fraction of a second of eye contact, a "*Bonjour, Madame* [or *Monsieur*]," and often a barely perceptible bow before proceeding to business.

This is why waiters look hurt when Americans fling themselves down at a table, calling out "*Garçon!*" (This word for "waiter" has been out of fashion for years; "*Jeune homme*," or even "*Monsieur*," is more acceptable.) Perhaps the American customers don't realize they're in the presence of someone who knows each ingredient in every dish on the menu and is probably getting a percentage of the restaurant's proceeds. The misunderstanding may explain why friends departing for Paris are always asking me if the waiters over there are nasty and snubbing. Not at all. For instance, one friend arrived at the brasserie Terminus Nord, near the Gare du Nord, expecting, as an unaccompanied woman, to be treated disdainfully. The minute she got inside, she warned the headwaiter that she was alone. With a welcoming bow, the waiter replied, "You are not alone, Madame; you are with us!" Now, if that isn't civility, what is?



We Americans usually recognize politeness when we see it, but when in France we often mistake for rudeness behavior that seems perfectly civil to the French. For instance, I used to smolder with quiet rage in Paris shops where I'd have to wait my turn while the proprietor or the clerk gossiped with another customer, talking of their winnings in the Loterie Nationale or the state of their livers, without even a sidelong glance at me. Finally, a Frenchman waiting in line ahead of me at my neighborhood department store, the Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, while the cashier endlessly passed the time of day with another customer, explained why the expression "I'll be right with you" has never passed French commercial lips. "That would acknowledge a call to work," he told me. A job in France comes with a wide range of generous perquisites and retirement benefits, but one is not necessarily expected to work very hard at the job, and fawning on customers would be too much like work. Nothing uncivil about ignoring them.

Other aspects of French civility which might be misunderstood by Americans:

- The French do not expect you to give so much as a friendly nod to, say, someone past whom you are squeezing in a narrow passage. This non-nodding shocked all the non-French passengers I met while cruising aboard the French computer-controlled sailing ship the *Club Med I* a few years ago. "Why, they're in the next cabin to ours, and they don't even speak to us in the elevator," was the kind of complaint I kept hearing. The French would think the non-nodders entirely civil, and would probably judge the greeting that Americans expect as insincere and unnecessary.
- It's perfectly correct to sit down on a seat in, say, the Metro without looking behind you to see if there's a straw hat, a tape recorder, or a cardboard box full of chocolate éclairs already on the seat. Like Queen Victoria, who is said to have never looked around to see if a chair was behind her before sitting down, the

French consider that they have a right to sit in any seat not occupied by a human being. Take a look at the Declaration des Droits de l'Homme, from 1789: this right is sure to be there somewhere.

- Americans must not mistake France's favorite word, *non*, for incivility. *Non* is the almost inevitable French response to a request, whether for approval of a treaty, a hand in marriage, an interview, or a simple statistic. (In this last case *non* may be replaced by the response "Write to the President of the Republic." That was the answer I got from several booksellers and a city-hall official when, doing research for a radio feature, I asked them how much it cost to rent a book-stall by the Seine.) But you should never take *non* for an answer. You're expected to repeat your request again and again, and after you're told *non* a number of times, the answer will usually be changed to *oui*. The French psychologist Jacques Durand-Dassier calls this *non* ritual "the primary refusal." I've found that if the requester turns away, accepting *non* as the final word, the *non*-sayer may well be disappointed. The effect is rather like that when one side in a tug-of-war suddenly lets go of the rope, causing the opponents to fall down in a heap.

None of these examples of French behavior should be taken as anti-American. True, these days many French people grumble that globalization is just Americanization; lots of them approved of the sacking of a McDonald's, two years ago, by José Bové, the leader of a farmers' union. And way back in 1949, when I was the only American student in a group of young French skiers at a youth hostel in the Haute-Savoie, an older bunch of Communist skiers arrived and called me "*Mademoiselle Plan Marshall*" with unmistakable disdain for my country. But that kind of feeling is temporary and skin-deep. The French have adored Americans ever since Lafayette and his fellow noblemen came over to help us with our Revolution, calling themselves "*les Américains*."

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The French have an absolute passion for things Native American, or they did as recently as the late 1980s, when turquoise jewelry, beaded headbands, and moccasins were all the rage in gift shops. You haven't truly understood French Americophilia until you have experienced a sweat lodge on the grounds of a French château. I sweated through two of these, one led by Adam Fortunate Eagle, a Chippewa of the Red Lake Band, the other by SwiftDeer, of Los Angeles. No one who saw the naked French participants intoning "*Grand Esprit, Mère Terre*" ("Great Spirit, Mother Earth") could doubt that the French love us.

The British love us too, in their own way—a different way from that of the French. I think the British—particularly the middle- to upper-class English—love Americans all the more because we allow them to feel superior. Their variety of civility, when two or three Brits are gathered together in the presence of an American, includes sharing a wink behind the American's back if he or she is unversed in British customs or pronunciation. But the disparaging comment behind an unsuspecting back was an old British tradition long before the arrival of 747s laden with Americans. Look at Jane Austen's novels, full of nice girls who sit demurely, day after day, eating and drinking with perfect civility in the houses of people they despise. "Though I think very well of Mrs. Jennings's heart," says Elinor Dashwood, the heroine of *Sense and Sensibility*, "she is not a woman whose society can afford us pleasure, or whose protection will give us consequence." Elinor and her sister then proceed to spend the next *two months* as houseguests of Mrs. Jennings's! It pains me to imagine what Jane Austen would have written about Americans, had any of them strayed onto her "little bit of ivory."

Nothing, though, gives the British more pleasure than secretly scorning American manners. Here our current President comes to mind once again. A decade ago, during the Administration of George Bush Sr., Queen Elizabeth

visited the White House, and although George W. was invited to the dinner, First Lady Barbara Bush gave her son strict orders not to speak to the Queen. "The family never knows what he'll say in polite society," a *Washington Post* article of the time reported. I think Mrs. Bush was making a mistake here. As it turned out, the Queen and George W. did get acquainted that evening, and it sounds as if they both had great fun. He told her that the cowboy boots he was wearing had been specially made for the occasion, and that "God Save the Queen" was emblazoned on each one. The Queen asked him if he was the black sheep of his family. He said that indeed he was, and asked the Queen who was the black sheep of *her* family. "Appearing from out of nowhere," according to the *Post*, Barbara Bush cut in with "Don't answer that!"

This past July the Queen and the erstwhile black sheep met again, on his swing through London. But he didn't stay nearly long enough to have the full British experience. When he makes a longer visit, members of the English upper crust are sure to flock around him. I'd like to suggest that next time he exaggerate his Texas-cowboy civility and talk like a character out of *Hee Haw*. (I admit that I act like Mammy Yokum, from Dogpatch, when in England, and it always goes down well.) If Prince Charles invites him to join the Beaufort Hunt in chasing some miserable fox, Bush should politely request a western saddle and call the hounds "dogs." He should revive his old habit of chewing tobacco, and when in the presence of nobility he should make amiable remarks like "How in heck did you *get* to be a dook?" He must pretend not to notice the glances exchanged by his hosts, who will be experiencing genuine, innocent enjoyment.

If President Bush follows this advice, he will be acting with true civility, the chief object of which, according to Emily Post, should be "consideration of others." He's sure to be dubbed England's Most Favored President.

In France, of course, they'll call him a *grand enfant* and kiss him on both cheeks. ■

BIRDING AT THE EDGE

Attu, the outermost of the Aleutian Islands, is remote, primitive, and cold, but it's the likeliest place in North America to catch sight of a number of avian rarities

BY JOHN FITCHEN

.....

We stood huddled on the soggy tundra beside the remote airstrip, our backs to the thirty-five-knot wind and horizontal sleet. For reasons hard to explain to those we had left behind, we had come to this stark and distant place in search of birds. As the sleet pelted Gore-Tex and infiltrated cracks in our clothing, I found myself wondering. *Why am I here? Why do we do this?*

On the tarmac in front of us was the plane in which we had arrived, a 1950s-vintage Lockheed Electra L-188 turboprop, operated by Reeve Aleutian Airways. The plane—a forerunner of the model the U.S. Weather Service uses to fly into hurricanes—looked old-fashioned but seasoned. It had carried us 1,492 miles west of Anchorage, past the 180th meridian, to the end of the Aleutian Islands: to Attu, the Holy Grail of North American birding.

In bucket-brigade fashion we off-loaded our bags from the cargo bay and stowed them under a tarp by the runway. We turned to watch the Electra taxi for takeoff. The plane would not soon return. Like it or not, we would spend the next two weeks on this desolate island, uninhabited except by us birders and a few members of the U.S. Coast Guard operating a navigation station. As we stood shivering in the wind, the group leaders explained that they needed to set up our quarters. In the meantime, we were going birding! For the next five hours, in what became whimsically known as “the Death March,” we trudged along the shores of Massacre Bay. The weather was so bad that birding was nearly impossible: binoculars fogged up and wind shook spotting scopes. Eventually we returned to the tarp by the runway to pick up our stuff and lug



it the two miles to “Base.”

Less than 250 miles from Asia, Attu is still part of Alaska, and therefore part of North America. This means that Attu is also part of the “ABA Checklist Area,” a geographic entity defined by the American

Birding Association as, essentially, North America north of the U.S.-Mexican border. The inclusion of Attu in the ABA Area matters to birders because they keep lists of birds seen in specific regions. Many consider the list of birds they have seen in the ABA Area to be the most important yardstick of their skill and achievement. Attu, because it is close to Asia, is likely to harbor Asian vagrants blown off course in their migration to Siberia—birds seldom if ever seen on the North American mainland. Attu offers an opportunity to see species for the first time—to get “lifers.”

A recent convert to serious birding, I had been unaware of Attu except as a distant World War II battle site. Then, in September of 1998, while bouncing around in a fishing boat on a pelagic birding trip off the coast of California, I heard one of the guides describe his recent trip to Attu. He spoke with awe and excitement about the birds he had seen. When I got home, I called the director of Attour, the outfit that had organized birding trips to Attu since the late 1970s. He told me that the three trips offered in 2000 would be the last. I sent in a deposit for the two-week trip planned for May of the final year.

Now, some eighteen months after I had signed up, here I was in the wind and sleet with a bunch of people I'd never met. There were eighty-six of us in all, sixty-three men and twenty-three women—seventy-four paying customers and twelve leaders and staff members. As we approached an aging building

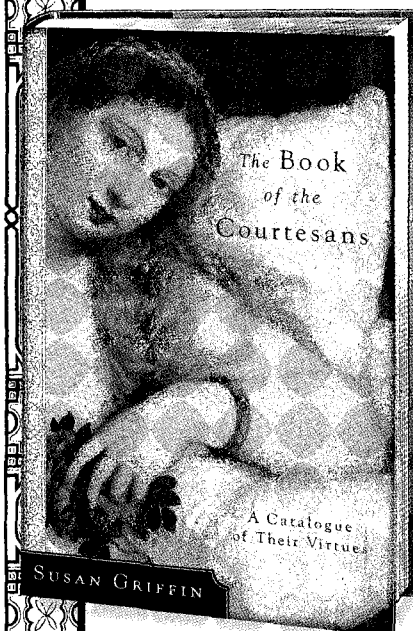
at the south end of Casco Cove, I wondered if this decrepit structure could possibly house us for the coming two weeks. It had been erected just after World War II and abandoned in 1960. Exhausted, soaked, and curious, we went inside. Despite ongoing mopping and the use of “salamanders,” kerosene-powered heaters that blew hot air onto the concrete, the floors were covered with water throughout the building. As I walked down a dank hallway and peered into the rooms, I noticed some writing on the few places where the walls weren't crumbling—summaries of previous trips, with names and life totals for the ABA Area. Some of the totals were over 800, and nearly all the rest were in the 600s and 700s. A few months before departing for Attu, I had taken considerable pride in reaching the 500-bird milestone. I stared at the big numbers on the wall and thought, *I'd better keep my mouth shut.*

When you start out, birding is simple. I tell beginners to think about music, motion, and anomaly: music because we often hear birds before we see them; motion because our eyes are more likely to notice something that is moving than something that is not; anomaly because a silent, motionless bird may stand out in some other way. Each of these fundamentals has deeper implications. You learn, for example, the importance of specific motions—flicking of the tail, bobbing of the head, frequency and depth of the wingbeats. British birders coined the term “jizz” (from G.I.S.—“general impression and shape”) to describe the gestalt of a bird, an impression that often has to do with the way it moves. Top birders sometimes amaze the rest of us by making identifications at great distances from jizz alone.

I was assigned to Room 9, a twelve-by-eighteen-foot space I would share with nine other men. The floor lay beneath a quarter inch of water; a cardboard sign on the wall, left by the previous year's occupants, read HOME SWAMP HOME. The room was furnished with five bunk beds. Because all ten of us were essentially middle-aged men, pleas for a lower bunk because of “prostate problems” fell on deaf ears. Eventually we got ourselves settled. That night dinner was canned chili with stale crackers.

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Coming as it did after the Death March and our uneasy introduction to Base, it was one of the best meals I've ever had.

After lights out, at 11:00 P.M., which coincided approximately with the setting of the sun almost due north of us, I lay in my bunk trying to determine how many of my roommates were snoring. Soon I began to perceive that there was a soloist in the nocturnal orchestra. His cadenzas would begin quietly, with an even measure, an almost soothing quality. Then the volume and tempo would increase, rising in a great crescendo, at the peak of which he would cry out, "Oh, geez!" or "Oh, my God!" The thought came to me again: *Why am I here? Why do we do this?*

According to a recent national survey conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, about 70 million Americans watch birds. But fewer than a hundred have 800 or more birds on their ABA life lists—an achievement that requires amazing drive and persistence. I asked one of them what he had done when he got lifer No. 800. He said, "I started looking for Number 801."

Why is 800 so hard to achieve? The official ABA checklist contains a total of 906 species, each of which is assigned a code from 1 to 6: Code-1 birds are common; Code-6 birds are extinct or unrecorded in the past century or seen only in captivity. Some 665 birds are designated Code-1 or Code-2, and twelve are Code-6. About 130 are Code-5 (fewer than ten recorded sightings over the past century), and the rest are Code-3 or Code-4. According to the checklist, Code-1 birds "occur routinely and are easily found," and Code-2 birds are "a bit more difficult to find than are Code-1 birds." This matter-of-fact language makes it sound as if finding Code-1 and Code-2 birds is simple—but consider my personal quest for the mountain quail, a Code-2 bird that, like me, is resident in Oregon. Over the past three years I have made at least twenty trips and driven more than 3,000 miles to appropriate habitat, and I have yet to get a definitive look at this elusive bird. I have concluded that Code-2 birds are indeed "a bit more difficult to find."

Birding on Attu was carried out in a great arc centered on Massacre Bay. To

the north is the Gilbert Ridge, a range of mountains hugging the northern shore of the bay, with Alexai Point at its eastern end; to the south is Casco Cove, where Base is located, and farther south is Murder Point, a promontory looking out over the open expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Groups of ten to fifteen birders with bicycles fanned out around the bay, maintaining contact by radio. We hoped that if a rarity was sighted at Alexai Point, we wouldn't be at Murder Point, fourteen miles away. But even if we were, the wisdom of the old-timers was "Go now, because if you wait till tomorrow, the bird will probably be gone."

I was with a group walking the beaches of Casco Cove when a call came in from the Gilbert Ridge: Siberian ruby-throat! We piled onto our bikes for the four-mile dash, praying that the bird would stay put. When we arrived, a row of birders was stationed along the rutted track at the base of the ridge, scopes and binoculars trained on a clump of willow shrubs. I focused my binoculars on the willows, staring at a tan leaf that seemed larger than the others. Suddenly the "leaf" turned toward me with a dazzling flash of its fiery-red throat. The birder next to me spoke in a hushed voice. "Jeezuss," he said, "what a bird."

Birders usually don't say "I saw the bird"; they say "I got the bird" or "I have the bird." And when they have gotten it, they *take* it (tick it on their life lists). The choice of verbs is revealing, suggesting possession, ownership. Of course, not all birds are gotten equally. Sometimes the light is perfect, the bird is close, and the key field marks are readily observed. Other times everything is marginal: the light is poor, the angle is wrong, and the bird is distant or partly obscured. How much do you have to see to be certain? When do you *have* the bird?

As the days passed, we were increasingly concerned about the weather. It had become too nice. At first this was a welcome change, a chance to dry out and warm up. But the respite from bad weather came at a high price—no new birds. The sentiment shifted from "We need a break" to "We need a storm." We would later be reminded of the aphorism "Be careful what you wish for."

One day in the meantime, I was sit-



"Home Swamp Home": Base

ting at Murder Point, hunched against the freshening wind, when a radio report came in: a Mongolian plover had just been sighted by a group at the tip of Alexai Point. I was as far away as I could be—but the old-timers would say, "Go now!" So I fast-walked the two miles to Base, climbed on my bike, pedaled six miles to the beginning of the Gilbert Ridge, leaped off the bike every couple of hundred yards to push it through the snowbanks that lay across the track for four miles along the ridge, and traveled the final two miles on foot to arrive at Alexai Point. It had taken me more than two hours to get there. "Is it still here?" I asked the people at the stakeout. "Haven't seen it for at least half an hour," someone told me, "but we're about to go out on the tidal rocks—that's where it flew." The kelp on the rocks was wet and slippery, the tide was coming in, and we had to hurry before our exit route was submerged. And then there it was—a fragile, sweet, innocent being in the middle of a vast expanse.

The storm we had wished for came the day before we were scheduled to leave. In a matter of hours the weather turned from sunshine and warmth to cold, rain, and eighty-knot crosswinds—too much even for the Electra. The delay would grow from hours into five full days. We milled around, anxious about families and jobs, worried about travel connections, running low on prescription medicines, eager to leave.

A few days before we finally got off

the island, the weather eased enough for us to bike to the ponds near the runway for good looks at Aleutian terns gathering to breed. As we walked the hummocks around the ponds, one of the leaders thought he heard a wood sandpiper—a Code-4 bird. A gray form whizzed over our heads and dropped in behind a small ridge. We sprinted to the ridge and peered over the top. I had a fleeting look and then the bird was gone. *Damn*, I said to myself, *I saw it, but I didn't get it*. Over the course of the next hour the bird was briefly sighted two more times. Then, suddenly, it landed less than a hundred feet from us, and stayed. It was looking right at us, almost as if it knew why we were there. "Sure would be nice if we could see the back," I whispered to no one in particular. The bird turned 180 degrees, revealing its spangled back, sprinkled with white and buff. "Doesn't it like to bob its tail?" someone asked. The bird bobbed its tail. "Aren't the wing linings key, paler than in the green sandpiper?" The bird shook itself and raised its wings. "It would be great to hear the song." A soft, rolling *tweadle, tweadle, tweadle* emanated from the bird. "Isn't the song louder and harsher when the bird is in display flight?" The bird soared into the air, repeating its song, loud and sharp. As the wood sandpiper flew out of sight, there was a brief, stunned silence and then the crowd of bedazzled observers erupted into spontaneous applause—a standing ovation on the windswept tundra of Attu. ▀

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BOOKS & CRITICS

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HUSTLER WITH A LYRIC VOICE

Edna St. Vincent Millay combined a modern sensibility with traditional forms

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

She wrote, famously,
My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light!

Fifty-one years after her death a two-alarm biographical fire has Edna St. Vincent Millay once more ablaze, and intermittently illuminated. She was always good copy in life: one of *The New Yorker's* first profiles featured her, and objection to its tales and innuendoes ("Edna Millay likes almost anybody's parties") helped lead to the establishment of the magazine's fact-checking department. Like Dylan Thomas and Sylvia Plath, Millay lived the kind of life now more associated with El's *True Hollywood Story* than with *The New Oxford Book of American Verse*, from which she was omitted in 1976. As the television program might say, she "came from nothing," and then she "had it all," and then she "threw it all away."

Edmund Wilson, who lost his virginity to Millay, once wrote,

Her poetry is not the work of a being for whom life could ever have been easy or gone along at a comfortable level. It will always give the lie to any too respectful biography ... but it will also always be there to make the casualties of her life seem unimportant.

The notion of a "too respectful biography" is now decidedly quaint. Even

when these new lives, by Nancy Milford and Daniel Mark Epstein, verge on the worshipful, they're serving up grainy Polaroids from inside the temple. And even with a new Modern Library edition of the verse itself, one can forget about poetry trumping the casualties of Millay's life. The first rule of modern literary biography is that the life renders the work incidental; Milford and Epstein rarely break that rule.

SAVAGE BEAUTY: THE LIFE OF EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY
by Nancy Milford
Random House, 576 pages, \$29.95

WHAT LIPS MY LIPS HAVE KISSED: THE LOVES AND LOVE POEMS OF EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY
by Daniel Mark Epstein
Holt, 320 pages, \$26.00

THE SELECTED POETRY OF EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY
edited by Nancy Milford
Modern Library, 144 pages, \$16.95

Millay's hardscrabble turn-of-the-century beginnings were like a fairy tale. Three sisters—one blonde, one dark-haired, and one, the future poet, a redhead—were raised on the Maine coast by their careworn but dreaming mother, after she had banished their father, Henry. Cora Millay supported the girls by itinerant practical nursing and wigmaking, an activity one sees in Millay's tribute to her mother, "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver."

Many bright threads,
From where I couldn't see,
Were running through the harp-strings
Rapidly ...

Cora managed to provide the girls with music and books. Prone to self-dramatization, she prepared her daughters for their own star turns. The life of their uncle Charlie had been saved at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York, so Cora's eldest girl wound up with the odd, beautifully dactylic name Ed-na

St.-Vin'-cent Mil-lay'. It would be no small contribution to her public success.

Cora had tried writing poetry herself. The youngest sister, Kathleen, would publish verse and fiction, and the middle one, Norma, would end up tending the flame (and papers) of "Vincent." Poorer than the real-life Mitfords, more difficult than the fictional Marches, the Millay women composed a remote, bracing female world in which Edna—before all the success and all the men and all the trouble—came to vivid life.

Throughout her girlhood she published poems in the children's magazine *St. Nicholas*, and by the age of sixteen, Milford claims convincingly, Millay had a genuine "sense of vocation" as a poet. Four years after that, in 1912, just when her life might have smothered itself in drudgery, her mother noticed the announcement of a lucrative poetry contest whose best entries would be published in a volume to be called *The Lyric Year*. The long poem Millay entered, "Renascence," would become for a time almost as often recited in some American schoolrooms as "The Highwayman" and "Hiawatha."

Millay actually lost the prize, probably by conducting what Epstein calls an "epistolary striptease" with one of the contest's judges, Ferdinand Earle, who began by assuming the author of "Renascence" ("E. Vincent Millay") to be a young man and then nearly lost his wife over his correspondence with a pretty girl up in Maine. Millay was learning to work both her talent and her ticket. Losing the prize brought her more fame than winning it would have, because established poets complained that her poem was obviously superior to all the others in the volume. Proceeding from a fantasy of suffocation ("awful weight! Infinity"), "Renascence" turns into a lyric cry of rebirth:



Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
And hailed the earth with such a cry
As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead, and lives again.

The poem *had* something—and it still does. Epstein sees the young Millay as holding a “vision of herself as both human and divine.” She would remain a sort of ecstatic commuter between those two states in the best of the love poetry she went on to compose.

Shelley was an important influence, as was American advertising. Millay began mailing her picture to all the editors and poets who wrote to her after publication of *The Lyric Year*. A somewhat later image of her, caught by the photographer Arnold Genthe, in which

she looks like a beautiful insect amid a tracery of magnolia branches, would perform the sort of retail seduction that has been achieved by photos of authors from Rupert Brooke to the young Joan Didion.

Millay knew how to interest older women as well as older men. Caroline B. Dow, who had heard her recite “*Renascence*” at the Whitehall Inn, in Camden, Maine, probably sublimated eros into patronage when she propelled the twenty-one-year-old poet toward a late arrival at the gates of Vassar College. Once there, already and forever the most famous girl in her class, she went to work on the younger students,

becoming, Epstein says, “the queen of a cult of personality.” She conducted, always on her own terms, lesbian affairs both crushy and carnal, meanwhile traveling down to New York for occasional trysts with the editor Arthur Hooley, whose taste for Swinburne seems evident in some of what Millay wrote during this period. She carried on a love-hate relationship with her “pink-and-gray college,” whose rules she always broke in the hope of being first punished and then forgiven. (Epstein believes that she put Vassar on the map, but today she occupies no mythic place there. It is unlikely that more than a handful of the students listening to this past spring’s commencement speaker, Stephen King, would have recognized her picture or her name, let alone a line she wrote.)

Once graduated, in June of 1917, she moved to the bohemian Greenwich Village of Max Eastman and John Reed, where she began her serious work in literature (the anti-war verse drama *Aria da Capo*) and romance. Millay lived with her sisters, performed with the Provincetown Players, and became involved with the dramatist Floyd Dell. At first she set up a neurotic tease: “We would now and then sit up in bed,” Dell later remembered, “she with her lamp-lit torso and small firm breasts confronting me with impudent audacity while she defended platonic love against Freud.” In giving in to Dell she appears to have crossed some sort of threshold, issuing the calm postcoital declaration “I shall have many lovers.”

But even after she went seriously to town (she would ask the journalist Dorothy Thompson, “Dotty, do you think I am a nymphomaniac?”), Millay practiced some of the insecure cruelty that one finds in Thomas Hardy’s Sue Bridehead, coaxing the fealty of suitors she had already rejected. Milford and Epstein both reconstruct the stiff little threesome that Millay designed one night for herself, Edmund Wilson, and his *Vanity Fair* colleague John Peale Bishop. “Sitting on her day bed,” Wilson wrote in his notebook, “John and I held Edna in our arms—according to an arrangement [she] insisted upon herself—I her lower half and John her

upper—with a polite exchange of pleasantries as to which had the better share.” Millay was annoyed that their both being in love with her hadn’t destroyed the young men’s friendship. She devised an even more complicated geometry, lengthy and long-distance, for herself and Arthur Ficke (the poet for whom she wrote the sonnet “And you as well must die, beloved dust”) and Ficke’s friend the gay poet Witter Bynner.

Epstein calls her an actress in the bedroom, and Milford reports that she was one of those rare people who literally like the sound of their own voices. The two biographers seem to be in essential agreement on Millay’s desire to control her lovers, often in the manner of a petulant, adored child—which is why Eugen Boissevain made such good husband material. A prosperous Dutch businessman, the widower of the Vassar suffragette Inez Milholland (famous for riding down Pennsylvania Avenue on a white horse), he was a natural soother

Milford points out, they went eleven without so much as a quarrel.

During this period Millay’s work remained taut and successful, particularly a libretto for Deems Taylor’s opera *The King’s Henchman*; sales of the printed version proved as robust as the reviews. Her specialty, however, continued to be what Epstein calls the “erotic sonnet,” and one such, “What lips my lips have kissed,” makes for a terrible book title (Epstein’s) but remains a very good poem, in which Millay fretfully mourned the “unremembered lads that not again / Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.”

While the great modernists were refracting themselves ever more obliquely into ever more elusive personae, Millay was a frail but flamboyant actual presence on hundreds of stages across the country. Milford brings her tiny frame back out in front of the lights, “dressed in a long gown of heavy creamy silk, her hair a flame of red.” She packed them in, reciting without a microphone “in

Any scolding he issued was more feminist than husbandly: “Is there any danger, Edna, that you are reverting to type, and becoming a regular woman, and losing interest in your work and yourself as a poet, and are just only interested in helping Him to be a poet . . . [?]”

Actually, no. Before the affair had even reached its climax, Millay produced the sonnet sequence *Fatal Interview* (1931), with herself playing Selene to Dillon’s Endymion. In a sonnet addressed to Boissevain, Millay turned his horns into laurels.

When failing powers or good
opinion lost
Have bowed your neck, should you
recall to mind
How of all men I honoured you the
most,
Holding you noblest among
mortal-kind;
Might not my love—although the
curving blade
From whose wide mowing none
may hope to hide,
Me long ago below the frosts had
laid—
Restore you somewhat to your
former pride?

As for the callow shepherd, after winning his own Pulitzer in 1932, for *The Flowering Stone*, Dillon never produced another book of poetry.

The first rule of modern literary biography is that the life renders the work incidental. Two new biographies of Edna St. Vincent Millay rarely break that rule—they serve up grainy Polaroids from inside the temple.

and nurse; he rescued Millay during her first period of severe illness, as she was turning thirty-one and coming home from two years in Europe.

They married on July 18, 1923, two months after Millay had won the Pulitzer and hours before she was operated on for Crohn’s disease and appendicitis. The combination of nuptials and the knife made for publicity of a very 1920s sort. (The unglamorous intestinal business was left out of the story.) The Boissevains settled into a handsomely renovated farmhouse (Steepletop) in the Berkshires at Austerlitz, New York. According to Epstein, who tends to hero-worship Millay’s cultivated husband (“Master chef and connoisseur of wines . . . sportsman, gardener, breeder of dogs and horses”), Boissevain’s “mission at Steepletop was simply to make way for Millay’s poetry.” The couple’s fidelity lasted about five years—but, as

Masonic temples, at women’s clubs, in university lecture halls, and at small colleges.” Millay complained at one point to Boissevain that she felt “like a prostitute”—a sensation some thrill-seeking part of her no doubt relished.

The domestic contentments of an overcivilized marriage were in some ways more suited to prose, but an affair with the young poet George Dillon, begun when she was thirty-six and he twenty-one, left Millay, according to Epstein, “in perfect ecstatic condition to write love sonnets of longing, despair, and grandiose aspirations.” Opposition from Boissevain might have provided even more stimulation, but he preferred to remain, to say the least, understanding. As the affair stretched on with the two lovers in Paris, he instructed his wife, “Settle down quietly, Edna, take a place for a year or come back here with him, do what you like . . .”

Thirty years have passed since Nancy Milford published her best-selling biography of Zelda Fitzgerald, a subject with obvious links to a poet she now says “gave the Jazz Age its lyric voice.” Both Millay and Fitzgerald made an endless stream of daredevil, look-at-me gestures; both had a childish need for adoration. But the latter, a woman of little talent and monotonous instability, was more than anything a bore. (So, finally, was *Zelda*.) Millay, with her genuinely complex talent, is a much richer subject—if one resists the impulse to overrate her. She may have given the Jazz Age its lyric voice, but she also had the big-top touch of Carl Sandburg and some other literary hustlers of the time. (Epstein did his warm-up for a Millay book with a 1993 biography of Aimee Semple McPherson.)

I’m not sure that Millay is worth thirty years of anyone’s writing life, but after making numerous references to

her 1970s visits with Norma Millay at Steepletop (now a National Historic Landmark), Milford offers no explanation for the long delay of *Savage Beauty*. There's a nice *Aspern Papers* feel to these encounters between the biographer and the surviving sister, who was by turns protective and jealous. In a wonderful scene Milford watches Norma slip Millay's Vassar class ring onto her own finger. "Vincent was free now," Norma says, "while I was the one at home, you see ... I was keeping house, that's all." But Milford's slowness in finishing the book dulls the contrast she's seeking between these "contemporary" scenes and her subject's remote past. When we see Norma watching *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* on TV, the supposed present day doesn't seem much nearer than the Jazz Age.

Three decades should have been enough time to pare away sentences like "One can almost feel the heat from the sparks flying from her pen" and to realize that readers requiring a definition of "appeasement"—Milford gives one—are unlikely to know who Edna Ferber was without some identification. For all its pleasures and general thoroughness, there is a disjointed quality to Milford's entire production. A number of incidents and figures, Boissevain included, take to the page only half explained or introduced; subsequent references assume a reader's acquaintance with facts that Milford provides only later still.

Epstein is a more prolific and versatile writer (seven volumes of poetry, a biography of Nat King Cole), and his tone is sometimes buoyant to the point of flippancy. He, too, breezes in and out of the book, a bit less successfully than Milford, as if he sees no difference between a preface and a text: "It is my opinion that Hooley had something to hide," he says with sudden first-personality several chapters into the body of his book; "but I can educe no evidence to prove this—it's only a biographer's hunch." He too often lapses into the style of a press release ("one of the finest sonnets in the language," "These rival the greatest love letters of all time"), but there's no denying he's the better-organized biographer when

it comes to any number of matters, from Millay's finances to her friends.

It's rather ridiculous that these two volumes should collide at Barnes & Noble and in the Amazonian ether in the very same month. Epstein must be annoyed by the star machinery that's been revved for the long-awaited Milford book, already excerpted in *Vanity Fair*—a magazine for which Millay wrote pieces under the name Nancy Boyd. And one can bet that Milford is galled by seeing the latecomer Epstein piggyback onto her subject and her reviews. But that's what she gets for taking so long. Epstein got to the Millay papers after Norma died and they were transferred to the Library of Congress. He mentions Milford only as a "biographer whom [Norma] engaged to write a book in the 1970s," and Milford doesn't mention him at all. Epstein comes up with an early Nicaraguan lover (the poet Salomón de la Selva) whom Milford seems to have overlooked, and devotes a chapter to what he insists was Millay's financially draining interest in thoroughbred racing, an activity she kept quiet for reasons of image. But the reader of both books will come away with no appreciably different estimations of Edna St. Vincent Millay's life and work—both of which ended badly.

During the 1930s and 1940s Millay became more and more depressed and alcoholic, and then, after a painful auto accident, ferociously addicted to morphine. The dope-taking logs, kept mostly in Boissevain's handwriting and described by Milford, are harrowing.

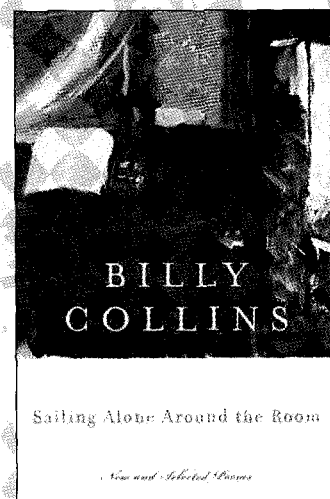
The first notebook begins on Tuesday, September 28, 1943, and continues to Thursday, November 30. On the first day of their record keeping, "Vince," as Eugen called her, was taking what appears to be a total of 3 grains of morphine, starting at 7 A.M., then at 8:10, 9:20, 9:40, 10:30, 10:45, 12:45, 1, 2:15, 2:30, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7:15, 8:15, 9:30, 10:30, 12, 1, 1:30 A.M., when she finally sleeps.

In an act of uxorious folly Boissevain started using the drug too—in order to know Millay's suffering, Milford suggests; to show her how to withdraw, Epstein argues. Millay eventually did kick the habit, but booze undid her re-

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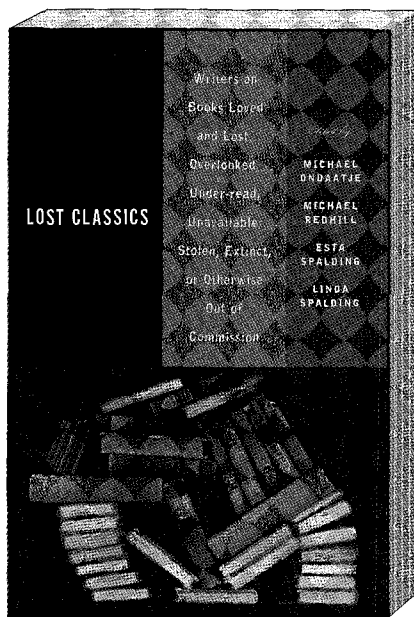
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maining health and confidence. She struggled to keep her humor and wit ("It may be said of me by Harper & Brothers, that although I reject their proposals, I welcome their advances"), but the fifty-six-year-old woman that Edmund Wilson saw in 1948, for the first time in two decades, shocked him as much as the bloated latter-day Maria Beadnell had appalled Dickens upon their reunion. Wilson wrote,

She had so changed in the nineteen years that, if I had met her unexpectedly somewhere, I am sure I should not have known her. She had become somewhat heavy and dumpy, and her cheeks were a little florid. Her eyes had a bird-lidded look that I recognized as typically Irish, and I noticed for the first time a certain resemblance to her mother. She was terribly nervous; her hands shook; there was a look of fright in her bright green eyes.

Her poetry had gone downhill too. Except for a de rigueur sympathy for Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s—marked by her wonderful appeal to the hanging governor Alvan T. Fuller: "There is need in Massachusetts of a great man tonight"—Millay was not terribly political. ("Economically," Epstein declares, "she was a proto-conservative, a natural capitalist.") Before and during World War II, however, she allowed herself to publish a lot of heartfelt, slack verse, often in newspapers, in behalf of American intervention and then the Allied war effort. Epstein does a good job with the motivating forces at work on her.

The poet for whom World War I had been little more than a disruption of her love life was truly wracked by the insane cruelty of World War II—because of her husband's relatives' suffering in Holland, and because the war rushed into a vacuum left in her by the flight of Eros. Her pain matched the world's; she was dying, and it appeared the world was dying, too.

Boishevain died in 1949, and Millay followed him a year later. She was fifty-eight. In a sort of poignant reversal of the Frost poem she was found, after a fall to the bottom of the stairs at Steepletop, by the hired man.

Millay retains a small, anomalous place in modern letters. Her sensibility was always more modern than her forms; reading her libertine sonnets to-

day is a bit like reading Wilfred Owen's Tennysonian evocations of machine-gunned flesh. It makes sense that she excited the admiration of both Hardy and Housman, two rigorous poets outliving themselves into the prime time of modernism. As Epstein points out, that very ism, as practiced on this side of the ocean, could never be hospitable to Millay's subject (love) or stance (emotional): "The modernist temperament of Eliot, Moore, Frost, and Stevens shrank from such outpourings."

One gets a brief, amusing sense of how Millay estimated her literary contemporaries from copies of recommendation letters she wrote to the Guggenheim Foundation, some of which Milford quotes to great effect. Millay's evaluation of E. E. Cummings, for example, was blunt, mixed, and hilarious. It concluded,

What I propose, then, is this: that you give Mr. Cummings *enough rope*. He *may hang himself*; or he *may lasso a unicorn*. In any case it is high time we found out about this man Cummings. Let us give him every opportunity to show us at once whether he is a genius, a charlatan, or a congenital defective,—and get him off our minds.

Still, neither Milford's book nor Epstein's is fundamentally about Millay's work, and it could hardly be otherwise. Epstein says, "It is never wholly safe to deduce biography from poetry," but the days are long past when we even pretended to be operating in reverse, using the former to explain the latter. The old New Criticism has achieved its goal of divorcing the writer's life and work by a means, and to an extent, that it never imagined. Celebrity culture has done the job. Literature, like the movies and politics, is chiefly a means of producing life stories. In Millay's case there was probably never much chance of a sound critical estimation. Reviewing her *Collected Sonnets* in 1941, Rolfe Humphries declared that "her progress ... from legend to success somewhat confuses discussion of her merit as an artist." Don't count on the future to bring additional clarity. The next little Millay revival will take place in 2010, when some nude photographs of the poet, now embargoed in the Library of Congress, become available for publication. **A**



BOOKS

FRANCE'S DOWNFALL

The most comprehensive account of the most sordid period in French history

BY EUGEN WEBER

.....

The history of the German occupation of France is fraught, dirty, tragic, and sometimes darkly comic. It is also one of the most intensely researched subjects of past decades: more than 8,000 books and articles have been devoted to the story of France's defeat, occupation, collaboration,

resistance, liberation, persecution of selected groups, and purges of persecutors and those identified with them during the four years from 1940 to

1944. Julian Jackson's monumental tome does not add to the accumulated knowledge but fuses and presents it

as clearly and comprehensively as can be done for times and activities that were violent, tedious, and untidy. Above all, it connects this bleak, confused period with what went before and

what would come after.

The French had been at odds with one another since the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

and certainly since 1789. Bloody civil wars tore them apart in the 1790s, in the 1830s, in 1848, and in 1871. Conflicts less gory but morally as destructive resurfaced in the 1880s and 1890s, and again in the 1930s. Beginning in 1934 moral and political turmoil kept threatening to erupt into something worse. With the Great War less than two decades in the past, a postwar tone gave way to a pre-war mood; politics became more polarized, social conflict more inflamed, intellectual debate more virulent. Overtly and covertly this continued through the Vichy years.

In May of 1940, when the Germans attacked, the French didn't know what had hit them. Eight months of phony war had dulled the vigilance of generals. In June the Germans entered Paris. In July 569 representatives of the people gathered at Vichy—because the spa offered plentiful lodgings—and voted full powers to Philippe Pétain (eighty voted against, seventeen abstained). Eighty-four years old, the hero of Verdun was vain and a bit deaf; his memory was unreliable, and he tired easily. But affairs would mostly be handled by Pierre Laval, the ex-Socialist mayor and deputy of a working-class constituency, who never could see any sense in war and who never faced a horse trade that he couldn't close.

When in the saddle at Vichy, Laval sought to make the best of an armistice under whose terms the French paid all the costs of the German presence on their soil, and which effectively rent the country into several morsels, only one of which (the southern zone, unoccupied until November of 1942) was directly controlled from the overcrowded spa. Laval's relations with the Führer were marred by his scruffiness and his chain-smoking, both of which Hitler detested. In German-occupied Paris, meanwhile, fascistoids advocating closer collaboration with the occupiers denounced a geriatric regime that they regarded as insufficiently cooperative with the Germans. With Vichy and collaborators in the occupied zone trying hard to outbid each other, Hitler played both like an expert angler. As for Pétain, he looked in good shape, and most people—including the Socialist Léon Blum,

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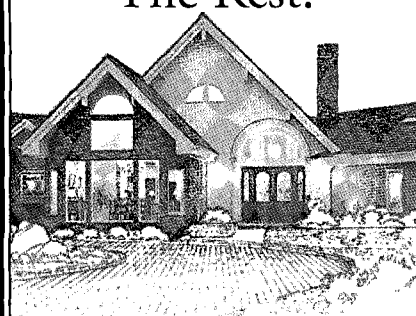
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who voted against him—noticed his handsome features, the nobility of his bearing, and “the simple and honest gaze of his blue eyes,” behind which Jackson detects peasant suspicion, duplicity, and high self-regard.

For the Vichy regime defeat would be the springboard for national regeneration. Pétain, compared to Joan of Arc, became France’s Messiah—a marshal-Christ who sacrificed himself for the redemption of his people. He would lead a National Revolution that would purify the corrupt and misled masses. Vichy’s “French State,” which we associate with long-drawn-out national humiliation and self-castigation, set out *à la recherche de la France perdue*. It replayed long-standing themes, fulfilled long-standing aspirations, exacerbated long-standing divisions, all at the shrillest pitch. Jackson, a history professor at the University of Wales at Swansea, has written about the Popular Front years and knows, for

the right to thrive. Indeed, it had long marched behind red flags, whether in the Commune of 1871 or in 1903, when miners of the north hunted down competing Belgians, or in the pogroms that killed thirty Italians (denounced as dirty, superstitious, and far too hard-working) from 1881 to 1893. References to “foreign hordes”—Poles, Germans, Spaniards—drew cheers at *fin-de-siècle* workers’ meetings. And when, in 1886, the Socialist *Cri du Peuple* denounced “The Invasion!” the editorial was signed by an emblematic Marxist leader of the day, Jules Guesde.

Difficult economic conditions—unemployment before World War I, devaluation in the 1920s, depression in the 1930s—along with greater-than-usual political instability, the challenges of modernity, the threat of decadence, all evoked foreign scapegoats, particularly those scapegoats of choice, the Jews. The association of Jews with usury and

Jackson puts the Resistance in perspective, showing the slow development of any real opposition. He cites Reichminister Albert Speer’s answer to a historian’s query about the Resistance: “What French Resistance?”

instance, that the interest in regionalism and folklore, and the campaigns—so dear to Vichy ideologues—to carry culture to the masses, date back to the 1920s and 1930s, if not long before that. Likewise, nostalgic references to the redemptive soil and to a peasantry unpolluted by modernity did not begin with Pétain’s assertion (coined for him by an urban Jew, Emmanuel Berl) that the land did not lie (as democratic politicians did). They went back at least to the nineteenth century, and entailed wistful praise of ancestral acres unsullied by urban corruption, and of role-model ancestors lying beneath them.

Strident rhetoric about “France for the French,” which can still be heard today, also harked back a long way. So did anti-Semitism—or, at least, disparaging references to Jews, which serve and long have served as examples of xenophobia. Xenophobia did not need the support of a regime identified with

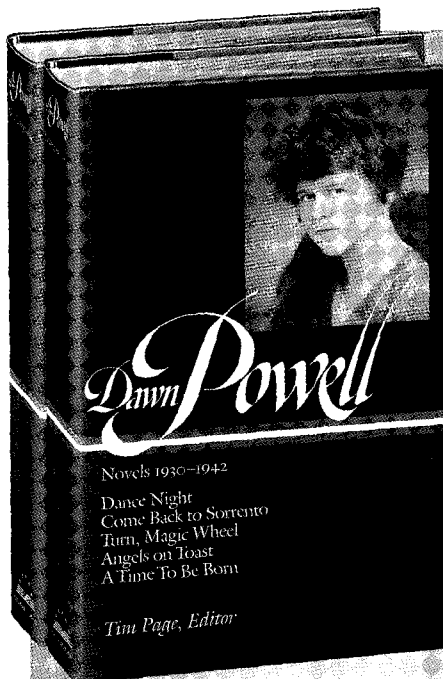
capitalism excited both left and right. The Jews’ association with Germany (Yiddish sounds much like German) sparked jingoistic ire. Jewish hostility to Germany provoked the hostility of embattled pacifists. Jewish identification with modernity in cinema and the arts evoked howls against Negro-Judeo-Saxon corruption. Long before Vichy named him ambassador, first to Bucharest and then to Berne, the sophisticated stylist Paul Morand had blamed national decadence on foreign plagues: “Italian eczema, Romanian blemishes, American boils, Levantine pus.”

Then came the Popular Front, the looming Communist menace, a flood of refugees from Central and Eastern Europe, and finally half a million more from Spain, pouring over the Pyrenees from February to May of 1939. (Vichy would later find the concentration camps into which the Republic had crammed Spaniards ready for its own prisoners.)

Meanwhile, a slim but much noticed contribution by that delicate and witty playwright Jean Giraudoux presented France as an invaded country over which barbarians had swarmed "like fleas on a puppy," and called for the creation of a Ministry of Race to stem the infiltration of hundreds of thousands of Ashkenazis escaped from Polish and Romanian ghettos. In July of 1939 Edouard Daladier put Giraudoux in charge of French propaganda services.

Nazis (and not only Nazis) had been working hard at turning race into a "scientific" conceit. But in France as elsewhere "race" was not yet a fighting word, let alone a very clear concept. The term tended to denote family or clan (the race of the Du Ponts) or profession (the race of policemen or pharmacists), and it could as readily be used for Bretons, Americans, poets, or Asiatics. It was not necessarily derogatory. But familiarity with this burgeoning if still amorphous notion facilitated the term's exclusionary use. Vichy was never sure how seriously to take the term, and its own view of race most often coincided with religion. But Vichy did not need clear definitions, not even allegedly scientific ones, to exclude whomever it wished from a national community that it defined at will. Before its advent, however, and despite the xenophobia of the late thirties, France took in a higher proportion of refugees than any other country in the world.

Vichy's National Revolution was neither national nor a revolution. Its first recipes for national revival involved singing the virtues of honor (readily besmirched), of the family (Pétain had been a notorious womanizer), of motherhood (a good excuse for discouraging the employment of women), of youth (fresh air, bare knees), and of folklore and *francité* (an idiotism for fundamental Frenchness). When it didn't involve parades of a military recently beaten hollow, the emphasis on national identity meant above all exclusion of those decreed to be non-French: the too recently naturalized, Freemasons (who were expected to abjure their secularist allegiance



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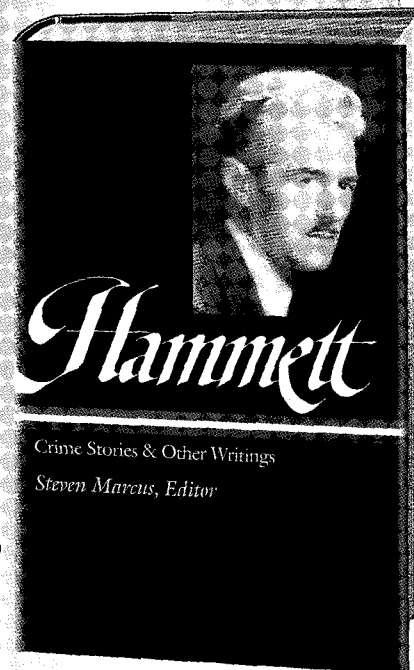
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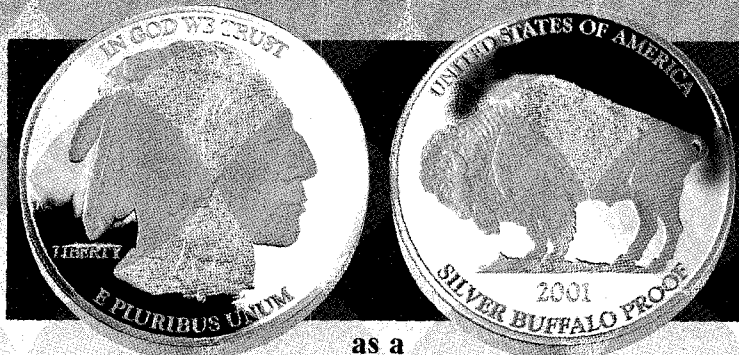
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or lose their jobs), Communists, and, of course, Jews. These last were barred from employment as public servants, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, lawyers, journalists, moviemakers, and, naturally, elected officials. The National Revolution aimed for repentance, expiation, and then redemption. But expiating was assigned to others.

Vichy issued twenty-six laws and twenty-four decrees against the Jews. Considering how few the Jews were (about 300,000 in 1939, a third of foreign origin), their power to harm must have been thought vast. Jews in the unoccupied zone were registered; their identity papers and ration cards were stamped JEW; and they were gradually squeezed out of normal society even before roundups and deportations began, in mid-1942. Vichy's concern with its dubious sovereignty put it in competition with the Germans in confiscating Jewish property and interning tens of thousands of people in atrocious conditions. When the roundups began, three quarters of the arrests were carried out by the French police—*gendarmes*—and, later, the paramilitary *milice*. Even so, “only” 24 percent of the Jews in France were deported, some 75,000, of whom 2,500 eventually returned. Only Denmark and Italy can show a better record. Fortunately, as Jackson demonstrates, public attitudes shifted from “indifference and hostility” in 1940–1942 to “solidarity and rescue” in 1942–1944, just when the danger to and need of the Jews became most acute.

Jackson is right to insist that Vichy public policy was not imposed by the Germans, who showed little interest in French internal affairs until 1942, but, rather, was “an autonomous policy, with its own indigenous roots.” The dead live a long time in France: the last head of Vichy's Commissariat for Jewish Affairs was the inept Charles Mercier Du Paty de Clam, a descendant of the major of that name who arrested Captain Dreyfus in 1894. But focusing too narrowly on Jews will skew perspective. At least until 1943 the French police worked closely with the Germans against “terrorists, Communists, Jews, Gaullists and foreign agents.” Jews

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were probably the most helpless and worthy of pity among these, but they never held the front of the stage. From May of 1942 to May of 1943, for example, roughly 16,000 Communists and Gaullists were arrested by the French police, who worked closely with the Germans, used torture as systematically as the Germans did, and happily handed suspects over to them. In July of 1942 the French police went after Jews in like numbers, herding 13,000 of them into the capital's velodrome, the Vel d'Hiv, in an infamous prelude to the deportation of 36,802 Jews—6,053 of them children—by the end of the year. The Germans would have lacked both the information and the personnel to carry out these arrests.

The point here is to stress the bureaucratic professionalism with which magistrates, police officers, and administrators of all sorts carried out their functions and their orders against those who were targeted by the state. One of Pétain's promises had been a leaner administration. In fact the state bureaucracy swelled from 650,000 in 1939 to 900,000 in 1944 and was tied up in more red tape than ever. The newly invented mobile police groups that the Fourth Republic recycled as CRS (Republican Security Companies) swelled also, as did regular police forces—henceforth no longer municipal but nationally controlled, ill equipped yet least inefficient in their repressive role.

A huge and hugely convincing book by Marc Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'Etat français* (1997), makes clear that only the dedicated efforts of the French enabled small German forces to police and harvest the large space they occupied. And Isaac Levendel's *Not the Germans Alone* (1999) lays responsibility squarely at the door not only of the Wehrmacht or the Gestapo but also of the civil servants who meticulously carried out their duties while paying no heed to any voice of conscience. Baruch agrees that conscientious objectors were few among functionaries. Respected, competent, intelligent civil servants abdicated personal judgment and carried out their orders. Only a few

resigned, and they did so without fuss or trouble. Collaboration evokes some of Jackson's liveliest pages. But the fanatics, cranks, informers, gangsters, sadists, journalists, men of letters, and black marketeers most visibly associated with collaboration played only secondary roles in its tragicomedy. The bilious output of a few dozen scribblers and fewer still talented pamphleteers grips us more than it gripped contemporaries, who had bigger concerns.

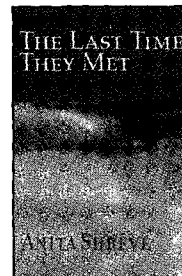
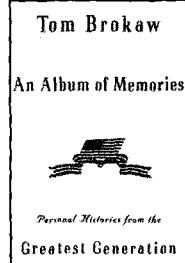
In a sensible section on cultural activities Jackson confirms the suspicion that artists can be asinine: Jean Cocteau, for example, was impressed by Hitler's artistic sensibilities. Jackson also relates the triumphs of cinema during the occupation to a desperate escapism. *Les Visiteurs du soir*, *L'Eternel retour*, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, remain the most visible in a spate of fantasies and costume dramas designed to obliterate the harsh realities beyond the flickering screen. Actors, painters, musicians, and writers frequented German "cultural" events in Paris that offered rare opportunities to eat and drink one's fill, and they accepted invitations to visit Germany. But so did businessmen, in greater numbers and to more concrete effect.

"Collaboration" can denote treasonous cooperation or the efforts of people working on a common project. Like civil servants, industrialists and financiers saw themselves in the latter light; and because they kept the wheels of industry turning, and meager wages coming to their ill-nourished help, others saw them that way too. By the end of 1941 the Germans were taking half of France's bauxite, aluminum, wool, shoes, and other leather products; 60 percent of its champagne; 90 percent of its cement. Two years later half of all nonagricultural production and an even greater proportion of agricultural production went to Germany. The caloric intake of the French may have been the lowest in Europe, less than half what it had been before the war. But factories hummed, and workers stayed at work. In 1944 some 14,000 to 15,000 French businesses were producing specifically for Germany.

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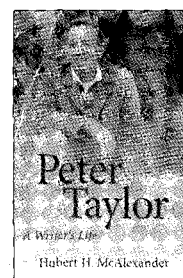


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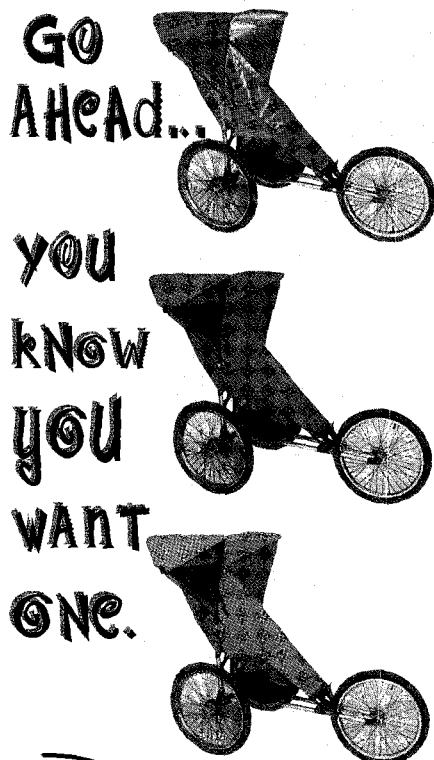
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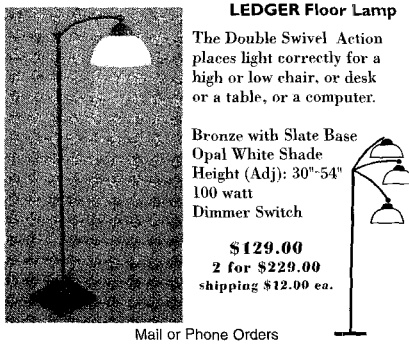


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characterization of Germany's approach to occupied France was "Give me your watch and I'll tell you the time." But if the Germans looted with all the enthusiasm once shown by Napoleon's armies, they also struck deals that could serve both sides. The new order was *European*. With French and German bankers, industrialists, and other businessmen meeting regularly, the idea of a United States of Europe was making its way, along with visions of a single customs zone and a single European currency. The European Union, its attendant bureaucracy, even the euro, all appear to stem from the Berlin-Vichy collaboration. Bureaucratic controls proliferated, administrative and business elites interpenetrated, postwar economic planning took shape—as did that greater Europe in which France's Hitler-allotted role would be one of a bigger Switzerland,

sympathized with the underground. That was what turned an insignificant trickle of resistance into a torrent.

Hiding out is not the same as fighting. Quite a few of the young men who ran from the STO joined the murderous *milice*—a chivalric elite dedicated to ridding France of "democracy, individualism, international capitalism, bolshevism, Freemasonry, and Jewish leprosy." A tall order. A lot took to the *maquis*. The first *réfractaires* (defaulters, rebels) who took refuge in the mountains or the countryside broke laws out of necessity, stealing provisions, clothing, ration cards, weapons. Gaullist broadcasts from London turned fugitives into heroes, endowing them with the romantic aura of persecuted bandits. That proved a self-fulfilling fantasy. Real heroes and heroines were thin on the ground in 1943, but they were there;

The point here is to stress the bureaucratic professionalism with which French magistrates, police officers, and administrators carried out their orders against those who were targeted by the Vichy state.

"a country of tourism ... and fashion." For the present France offered an economy to be milked at will, and a reservoir of labor.

In February of 1943 German demands for manpower forced Laval to introduce the Compulsory Labor Service (STO). Already 185,000 volunteers (including the future leader of the French Communist Party, Georges Marchais) had found work in Germany. But far more numerous than those who, however unwillingly, obeyed the draft were those who would not go—who hid, who ran away, who took to the hills, the forests, the *maquis* (a term for Corsican scrubland which came into general use by April of 1943). The STO turned law-abiding folk into outlaws and made law-enforcement agencies reluctant to enforce the law. Church dignitaries, most of them silent about the fate of the Jews, criticized the labor draft. In September of 1943 the prefect of Marseille estimated that 90 percent of his police force

and they provided structure and training for those providential recruits.

Jackson, who is good about a lot of things, is very good on the Resistance. He puts it in perspective, showing how many idealistic resisters started out working for Vichy, and how many of them, right up to the Liberation, shared entrenched prejudices against Jews and foreigners and mistrusted the "British, Jewish and Masonic influences around de Gaulle." He judiciously notes the slow development of any real opposition. He cites Reichminister Albert Speer's answer to a historian's query about the Resistance: "What French Resistance?" The view of the Allies is reflected in the supplies they dropped: from 1943 to 1945 the Yugoslavs got 16,470 tons, the Italians 5,907 tons, and the French 2,878 tons.

Meanwhile, 10,000 adventurers, lunatics, criminals, dreamers, and lost souls who had volunteered for Hitler's Charlemagne Division were sent to fight the Red Army in Pomerania.

The five score or so men who survived that bath of blood and mud ended up defending the rubble of the Reich Chancellery in the final battle for Berlin. Joseph Darnand, a much decorated hero of both world wars and the leader of the *milice*, who had become a *Sturmabannführer* of the Waffen SS, was brought back to France, tried, and shot in 1945. Exhumed from a mass grave, his remains now rest in a Paris cemetery, sumptuously marked by the proceeds of a public subscription.

Some 9,000 collaborators, suspected collaborators, or people who had simply incurred their neighbors' dislike were killed just before and during the Liberation; about 1,500 more were executed after trial; more than 40,000 were sentenced to prison terms; 20,000 to 30,000 public servants were sanctioned. Among these were few policemen. In August of 1944 the police in Paris and other cities had mutinied against the Germans with whom they had collaborated for so long, and thus qualified for resister status. From 10,000 to 20,000 women (though not Coco Chanel or Arletty) were accused of horizontal collaboration and had their heads shaved, or were subjected to other forms of public humiliation in repulsive and sexist scenes. But 80,000 Frenchwomen of the occupied zone had by mid-1943 claimed children's benefits from the German authorities and requested German nationality for their offspring.

By the summer of 1945 continuity had reasserted itself in the same police officers, the same uncivil servants, the same top people who had attended the same schools, much the same political personnel as in 1939, and some of the cultural personnel of Vichy as well. Hubert Beuve-Méry, who had worked at Uriage, Vichy's main school for cadres, edited the major national daily, *Le Monde*. Jean-François Cravier, who published his influential *Paris and the French Desert* in 1947, had written a similar plea for decentralization five years before, while training propagandists for Vichy. Jean Vilar, the founder of the Avignon theater festival in 1947, had worked for one of Pétain's well-intentioned youth organizations.

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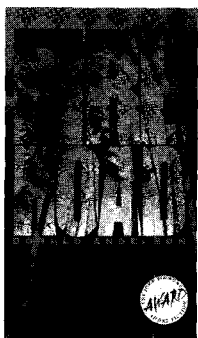
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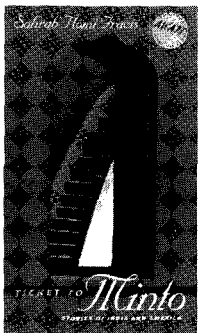
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René Bousquet, the Secretary-General of the National Police (another Vichy innovation), had loyally and efficiently collaborated with the Germans before becoming prefect of police in Paris under the Fourth Republic. In 1946 the demographer and economist Alfred Sauvy and the pediatrician and former resister Robert Debré (father of a later premier) published a book on population problems: *Des Français pour la France*. With regard to immigration they recommended avoiding "credulous and fatalistic Arabs or ... crafty Levantines," and hoped that the "little Israélo-Oriental" ghetto in central Paris would not be replicated. The lyrics had changed slightly, but the tune remained the same.

The knack of shifting blame for national problems also inspired some familiar tunes. Wounded nationalism had prompted much Vichy rigmarole. It colored redemptive patriotic propaganda after 1945 as it had done before. The French bought De Gaulle's fable that France had liberated itself. But the Liberation, which solved the German problem, had not ended hard times or restored national stature. Debilitating forces still sapped French spirit, power, and pride. Since those forces could no longer be attributed to Germans or Jews, they would be attributed to perfidious confederates.

The 1920s and 1930s had spurred denunciations of enervating Americanism: *Uncle Shylock* (1927), *The American Abomination* (1930), *The American Cancer* (1931). These fancies resurfaced even before the fighting wound down. Surveys taken in September of 1944 and in May of 1945 showed a majority of French identifying the United States as the country that disappointed them most. France was poor, the United States was rich. The French had gone through hell, as had the Russians. Soviet Russia was poor, brave, anti-materialist, and, above all, far away. Americans, far more visible, were easier to resent. U.S. foreign policy had long been an extension of U.S. trade. Now trade carried the alien U.S. culture, too. Displaying a remarkable ingratitude toward their genuine liberators, the French held that American culture was high-handed and invasive and represented material-

ism and other seductive ills. Americans also stood accused of the failure of their own ideals. They would continue to do so.

Jackson has synthesized a wealth of secondary works in an account that is thorough, thoughtful, lucid, and awesomely commodious. What he has not done is to convey the atmosphere of those years: the archaic dottiness of Vichy claptrap, all clean living and fuzzy thinking; the use of "National" to designate the least smokable, drinkable, eatable, or wearable products; the appeals to energy, vitality, virility; the power cuts and lack of heat; the shortages of paper (so painful to pullulating bureaucrats), real coffee, sugar, and tobacco; the stews of cat, crow, or pigeon; the winds of virtue blowing furiously to prohibit dancing, Pernod, Dubonnet, and "Judeo-American" music; the concomitant vogue of jazz, of swing, of clandestine hops, and of the slang connected with them (to be "swing" was to be cool); the rage for wearing berets, preferably capacious ones "practical to cover your ears," and their abandonment after the Liberation, when they were tarred with the brush of Vichy; the doubletalk, the humorlessness, the creeping seediness; the shabby, shiny, stained, and greasy clothes, threadbare and stinking with sweat.

Anonymous tip-off letters are mentioned ("a symbol of our time," a novelist called them then), a deluge of which overwhelmed the authorities; but in fact most of them were not anonymous but signed, because only a signed letter could earn the reward that went with the capture of a Gaullist, a Jew, a Communist, or an Allied agent. And most of these letters were written by women. The terminology of everyday life under the occupation is lacking in the book: *Zone Nono* (unoccupied zone), *jours sans* ("days without"—when meat, butter, whatever, could not be served or sold), the *blaqueoute*, *prendre Londres* (the BBC at 9:55 P.M.), *faire Viandox* ("to turn [someone] into dead meat," from a brand name for beef bouillon cubes), and so on. But one can't do everything. Jackson has done almost everything, and he's done it spaciouly and well. ■

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

*A sly and sublime historical novel;
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.....

For a decade now the British writer Beryl Bainbridge has reshaped the historical novel according to a less-is-more agenda. Not for her the lavish spectacle or painstaking sociopolitical overview. Instead she leads her readers, with few guiding lights, toward some tight and often perilous corner of the past—a Crimean War battlefield (*Master Georgie*), the *Titanic* on its way down (*Every Man for Himself*)—as if to see how we'll fare there. Hers is a grisly vision, with death coming for her floundering, blinkered protagonists sooner rather than later. And yet there's something transcendent in the human struggles she depicts, which touch on both the farcical and the sublime.

According to Queeney is about Samuel Johnson in the last two decades of his life, and it shifts the ground from the physical extremes of war and shipwreck to a setting of urban flux and clamor. But the same circumstances obtain: death looms everywhere, and a whole life is to be given meaning—books written, a past revisited, a final romance consummated—before the moment of extinction arrives. The tone, as always with Bainbridge, is complex: a kind of visceral, biting tenderness or wily, anguished admiration, as Johnson and his *objet d'amour*, Hester Thrale (the latter encumbered with a living husband, a dying mother, and numerous ailing children), fumble toward an understanding of their feelings for and expectations of each other. Snapping those fumbblings into focus is Hester's precocious daughter Queeney, whose jealous temper has a simultaneously sharpening and distorting effect on her insights.

The novel's intent is evident in both its title and its structure. Each chapter recounting events from Johnson's life is



ACCORDING
TO QUEENEY

by Beryl
Bainbridge
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followed by Queeney's impatient replies, years later, to queries from a would-be chronicler of Johnson's London. And each reply twists or refutes some detail in the passages preceding it. Bainbridge slyly puts readers at the same disadvantage as her characters, who are rarely clued in to the full picture; and this very constriction of viewpoint is what immerses readers so hectically in the lives and era of the novel. The result: Bainbridge never has to tell you where you are, because, by her own oblique and canny means, she has taken you there already. —MICHAEL UPCHURCH

Not long after Joan Didion left southern California for New York, a Los Angeles writer compared her to a cut flower, severed from her roots. At the time, I thought that was just bitterness talking, but now I'm not so sure. In the thirteen years since Didion moved to Manhattan, her work has become flat, almost indifferent, disconnected from the world. The best essays in her collection *After Henry* (1992) are those dealing with Los Angeles; her novel *The Last Thing He Wanted* (1996) is as blank and mannered as a polished stone. It's as if Didion on the East Coast has retreated to a strangely insular landscape, devoid of interaction with daily life. Surely that's the case with *Political Fictions*, her fourth volume of essays, which, even while criticizing the American political process as "perilously remote from the electorate it was meant to represent," never overcomes its own profound disengagement.

There's a certain irony to this, and not just because Didion's remoteness mirrors the process she writes about. After all, Didion's main strength as a writer has always been her aloofness, her ability to stand back and comment



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on what she sees. In her best work—the essays of *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968) and *The White Album* (1979), and the full-length nonfiction efforts *Salvador* (1983) and *Miami* (1987)—it is tempered by a participatory edge. Here participation tends to go by the wayside, replaced by a fuzzy ruminative quality most notable for its lack of nuance. American politics, Didion declares, is an industry, incestuous and self-involved. The issues that compel us are in no way organic but, rather, manufactured hot buttons, meant to mobilize an increasingly narrow range of swing voters, on whom electoral outcomes rely. Though it's difficult to deny the accuracy of such observations, they're hardly eye-opening in the manner Didion intends. Yet throughout *Political Fictions* she returns to these commonplaces as if they were revelations by which our understanding of politics might be transformed.

None of that might be so bad were there more reporting in these pages, more perspectives for Didion to navigate. The key failure of *Political Fictions*, though, is that except for "Insider Baseball" (which already appeared in *After Henry*) and "Eyes on the Prize," a deftly layered account of the 1992 Democratic Convention, it features virtually no reporting. Instead most of the essays function as extended book reviews, with Didion reacting to her material from the safety of a reader's chair. In "Newt Gingrich, Superstar" she laments the former speaker's influence through the filter of his books as opposed to his programs; in "Clinton Agonistes" she writes not of the journalistic frenzy that accompanied the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal but of how that frenzy was interpreted in, for example, the *Columbia Journalism Review*. If this were a starting point, a way of mapping out the territory, it could be useful—"History is context," Didion writes in "The West Wing of Oz." But in the end *Political Fictions* offers not history but historiography, which is a second-hand process at best. —DAVID L. ULIN

Jim Crace is one of the best novelists in Britain; in the United States he is hardly known. His work doesn't clamor for attention, like Martin Amis's and Salman Rushdie's; nor does it draw one

in with conventional, reader-friendly narratives, like Pat Barker's and Ian McEwan's. On the contrary, its muted rhythms require a certain engagement from the reader, a willingness to read more slowly, to listen harder. Those who do so will be rewarded with fiction that is thoughtful, harmonic, and original. Crace never squanders a word or an image.

"I count myself to be a traditional, old-fashioned novelist rather than a conventional writer or a new-fangled novelist," Crace has written. "I am more interested in the fate of communities than the catharsis of individuals ... My books are not an exploration of self. They are not autobiographically based. I do not write from experience." Well, yes—up to a point. Individuals, characters, may not be his central interest, but he creates fine ones. And although he is not exactly experimental, it is hard to classify him as traditional: he seems too clearly to be always striving for new forms of evocation and description.

Crace's first book, *Continent*, a collection of interwoven stories, was published in 1986. Since then he has written, among other fiction, a novel about the onset of the Bronze Age (*The Gift of Stones*, 1988); one about rural nineteenth-century England (*Signals of Distress*, 1994); and one about modern metropolitan life (*Arcadia*, 1992). His 1997 novel *Quarantine* painted an indelible picture of Jesus' forty days in the desert as imagined by Crace, a self-described "post-Dawkins scientific atheist." His *Being Dead* (2000), which won the National Book Critics Circle award, was one of the most extraordinary books of recent years, a spare, unsentimental, yet seductive and even spiritual description of the process of death, decomposition, and renewal.

Crace has always shown a keen appreciation for the sensory and the physiological: for him, mind and body are intimately joined. With *The Devil's Larder* his subject is food and all its social, sensual, aesthetic, and even moral and spiri-



THE DEVIL'S LARDER

by Jim Crace

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 176 pages, \$20.00

tual implications. The book is not a novel but a succession of sixty-four fictional vignettes, each using food in a central role. He mingles the sensuous and the symbolic with impressive flexibility.

Food as nurture, as a symbol of love, has become a commonplace, but Crace is also aware of its possibilities in achieving revenge, and of eating as an act of aggression. In one particularly sardonic tale a widow whose husband had demanded perfect service at every meal continues to set a place for him after his death, gloating in her current solitude and his deprivation. And in a restaurant somewhere in the Australian or the African bush gastronomic pilgrims, in a grim parody of the restaurant culture of London and New York, dine on soft-bodied spiders, forest roaches, nearly extinct parrots, and a mysterious curry made of something still more sinister and exotic. "The atmosphere is sexual ... We mean, at last, to cross the barriers of taste."

Crace communicates every state from degradation to ecstasy. If *The Devil's Larder* is inevitably disappointing after *Being Dead*, which came close to fictional perfection, it is a curious and fresh piece of work on its own rather stylized terms. Will it prove to be, for American readers, Crace's long-overdue breakthrough book, propelling him to the fame he deserves? Doubtful: it's a little too slight and mannered, and, like all of Crace's work, lacks surface dazzle. For those who don't require such superficial, attention-grabbing style, though, or who can look beyond it, Crace is among the most rewarding authors at work today. —BROOKE ALLEN

Sebastian Junger was eleven years old when a terrifying experience on a snow-swollen mountain left him feeling as if he'd been "some other place these people don't even know exists." The ordinary world seemed frivolous, oddly unaware, when he made his way back to it. With *Fire*, the new collection of journalism by the author



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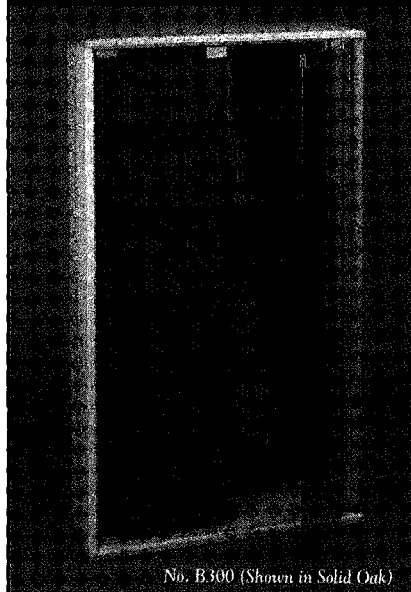


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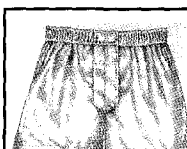


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of *The Perfect Storm*, Junger proves that he will travel nearly anywhere—to Kosovo and Sierra Leone, to Afghanistan and a dry-lightning fire—to bear witness to life's extremes. Junger is not a moralizing journalist. His stories in *Fire*, many of which have been previously published, tend to end as they begin—with a discovered detail or an irresistible fact, rather than an epiphany or a petition. The accretion of minutiae is his greatest talent: he lays down the mundane beside the lyrical—patiently, without bravado. Whereas the essays on fire display an obsessive's intensity, and the essays on war and terrorism are engrossing, instructive, and alarming, the essay called "The Whale Hunters" shows Junger at his best. It is an exhilarating piece in every sense—magnificently conceived, lovingly written, perfectly evocative of a place, a time, a passion. A portrait of the world's "last living harpooner," "The Whale Hunters" depicts a gory—even horrific—business with poetically precise prose, as when Junger writes, of the harpooner's whale boat, "The *Why Ask* ... was built on the beach with the horizon as a level and Ollivierre's memory as a plan." —BETH KEPHART

Donald Richie, an Ohioan who has spent most of his long life in Tokyo, has written on his adopted country better than anyone else writing in English, while reigning as an international authority on Japanese movies. His eye-opening masterpiece, *The Inland Sea*, forms the backbone of this subtly organized, ingeniously printed sampling of his writings, fiction and nonfiction, which has been somewhat overcurated by Arturo Silva. Richie first encountered Japan in 1946, as a very young man working in the American Occupation, and he has grown through five decades of change into something of a sage. In his portraits of friends, neighbors, cineastes, and landscapes, his ruminations and reportage on places, events, people, and films, Richie delivers a lively, witty appreciation of

the details of Japanese food, body language, personality, sexuality, costume, behavior, houses, cities, villages, and gardens. He never loses track of history or ignores the squalors and indignities of the present, and he celebrates Japan's "genius for the harnessing of change." His vision of Japan is at once beautiful and sinister, ambiguous and vibrant. —PETER DAVISON

A former newspaperman, Daniel Akst made expert use of his reportorial and rhetorical skills in his critically successful debut novel, *St. Burl's Obituary* (1996). That book featured a memorable protagonist, a Falstaffian journalist at odds with both organized crime and his own disorganized appetites. But Akst strikes an even richer seriocomic vein with his new novel's hero (of sorts), Terry Mathers. Editor of the eponymous small-town weekly newspaper *The Webster Chronicle*, Terry is forty and going nowhere fast: he's a self-confessed "aging, impoverished pothead condemned to chronicle the life of a flyspeck town" somewhere in the Northeast, heading toward divorce, cursed by a chronic stammer, and dwarfed by the celebrity of his father, a populist TV commentator revered as "a sage and national shrine."

Richard Russo has pretty much owned this fictional turf, but Akst works it sturdily, juxtaposing the stages of Terry's ongoing early-midlife crisis with the panic that seizes Webster's citizenry when the aftermath of a fatal automobile accident leads to allegations of sexual abuse at the Alphabet Soup Preschool. A tangle of heated accusations and counteraccusations ensnares nearly two dozen vividly portrayed characters, including the stigmatized (and perhaps martyred) family that owns Alphabet Soup, a heartless district attorney, a reformed-alcoholic clergyman, and several women from a Wiccan coven. Akst gathers their intricate (often very funny) interactions into a



THE WEBSTER CHRONICLE

by Daniel Akst
BlueHen/Putnam
311 pages, \$24.95



THE DONALD RICHIE READER

edited by
Arturo Silva
Stone Bridge Press
276 pages, \$19.95

potent social melodrama that relaxes its grip on the reader only sporadically, whenever Mathers is permitted overemphatic, guilty second thoughts about the furor he has helped to create.

Nevertheless, *The Webster Chronicle* moves swiftly and deliberately, powered by crisp, flexible sentences that convey information economically while easily accommodating witty, arresting turns of phrase. (Akst even devises a good fictional *Time* magazine title, "The Devil and Denial in Webster.") Furthermore, its ironic revelations about the power of mass communication to shape and distort public awareness reflect the instinct for accuracy of a good journalist who may be an even better novelist. —BRUCE ALLEN

The Scrabble-obsessed, dictionary-memorizing misfits we meet in *Word Freak* make most teenage Olympic gymnasts look well rounded. A sports-writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, Stefan Fatsis infiltrates the pro Scrabble circuit and almost doesn't make it back. He starts out like Margaret Mead among the headhunters, observing his subjects, learning their lingo, befriending a few of the more approachable specimens. Before long, though, Fatsis goes native. He's conning lists of all the two- and three-letter words in *The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary*. He's avoiding the Q instead of wishing for it. Some days he could use a bath. But for anybody who has ever heard that uniquely flattering phrase "I don't want to play with you anymore," Fatsis and his word-mad friends may provoke more admiration than unease. Writers make up an especially at-risk population here. What is Scrabble, after all, if not the search for *le mot juste* made scorable? From the dyspeptic Scrabble champ "G.I. Joel" Sherman (of whom Fatsis writes, gloriously, "Water gives Joel mucus") to Mike Baron (he of the DOES ANAL RETENTIVE HAVE A HYPHEN? T-shirt), these



WORD FREAK: HEARTBREAK, TRIUMPH, GENIUS, AND OBSESSION IN THE WORLD OF COMPETITIVE SCRABBLE

by Stefan Fatsis
Houghton Mifflin
382 pages, \$25.00

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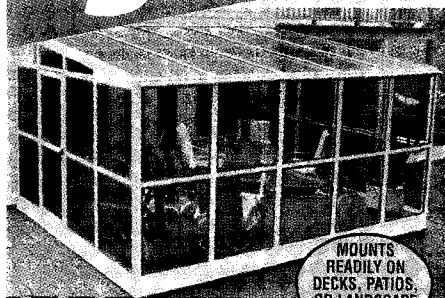
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lucky maladepts *do* get to fool around
with words all day.

As Fatsis readily admits between
games at the \$15,000 world-champio-
nship tournament, though, "the com-
mon language here isn't English." In
English, definitions matter. In high-
stakes Scrabble, learning them actual-
ly slows players down, because it cuts
into their memorizing time. If the
book has a flaw, it's Fatsis's reluctance
to ask whether his new friends have
distilled Scrabble to its essence or per-
verted it into an altogether different
game. These guys—and they are mostly
guys—envision a day when Scrabble
will gain a long-coveted parity with
chess as an elite intellectual recreation.
Meanwhile, we lowly Scrabble duffers
would rather daydream about a future
in which Vegas finally wakes up and
makes room for Scrabble tables, there-
by widening the casinos' niche beyond
people who think they're lucky to the
much larger target market of people
who think they're smart. Should that
day ever dawn, Stefan Fatsis may have
to decide between two career options.
Either he can become the in-house
Scrabble pro at Circus Circus, or he can
free up all the gray matter he now
devotes to consonant-free two-letter
words and put it to work on something
he's already good at: funny, thought-
ful, character-rich, unchallengeably win-
ning writing. —DAVID KIPEN

Like most other
Americans in the
1990s, the characters
of Bobbie Ann
Mason's first collection
of new work in more
than a decade have
grown richer, more
mobile, and more at
ease with mass media
and technology. Mas-
son has always, to her
credit, let her Ken-
tuckians enjoy popular culture with a
gentle glee, never eschewing it as too
vulgar a basis for meaning. Take a left
at the end of this author's *via negativa*
and you may just find a Cracker Barrel
restaurant.

Zigzagging Down a Wild Trail



**ZIGZAGGING
DOWN A
WILD TRAIL**

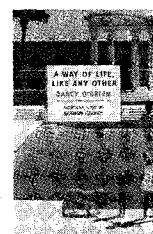
by Bobbie Ann
Mason

Random House
224 pages, \$22.95

shows Mason's working-class heroes
branching out, some leaving their
customary nooks close to Appalachia,
a few even admitting ingress to that
horror of horrors, the middle class. As
the title suggests, there are bumps
along the way, there is energy, there
is exhilarating disorientation. The
first three tales—"With Jazz," "Tobrah,"
and "Tunica"—are the most effective.
In them her protagonists' reasoning
and mordant humor are familiar, if
more self-conscious than in her pre-
vious work. In these stories Mason goes
on, powerfully, to cut various escape
tunnels through the hills of her psy-
chic Appalachia, whether by means of
a spiky narcissism (in "Tobrah" a wom-
an adopts a child, partly for emotional
comfort) or through sex, a "delicious
limbo of temptation, where everything
at stake seemed make-believe."

Elsewhere Mason almost zigzags
out of her depth. "Proper Cypsies," set
in London, paints an invidious *tour
d'horizon* of Britain straight from the
Lonely Planet guide. And "Thunder
Snow," a sort of Gulf War ecphrasis, is
unconvincing and oddly parochial.
Nonetheless, Mason's return to short
fiction is welcome and interesting; if
anything, the missteps suggest only
that she should practice the form more
regularly. —BILL BROWN

How is it that this
minor comic mas-
terpiece could ever
have gone out of print?
Darcy O'Brien's 1977
novel (now repub-
lished by New York
Review Books, to which
all praise) takes us
into an alien culture,
Hollywood in the late
1940s and early 1950s,
and evokes that kitschy
world with spectacu-
larly deadpan humor. In an imperturb-
able, almost affectless voice, O'Brien
(1939–1998) relates a boy's coming of
age, mainly by focusing on his life
with his faded-star parents—a washed-
up movie cowboy and a tormented,
promiscuous lush always searching for
"the perfect man."



**A WAY OF LIFE,
LIKE ANY
OTHER**

by Darcy O'Brien

New York Review
Books, 169 pages,
\$12.95

Tone is all here, and the unnamed first-person narrator's tone may be likened to that of a deeply appalled but resolutely unflappable anthropologist. When the ditzzy mother confides to her teenage son that she has difficulty achieving orgasm, he says, with typical understatement, "I had no suggestions to make, but she appreciated my sympathy." A likable John Bircher confides that "a recent failure of the cranberry crop was a communist plot to undermine the integrity of the Thanksgiving dinner." In contrast, the actual dinner-time feeding frenzy at a schlock-movie producer's home resembles "the first meal for the Donner Party after six months of shoe leather and cannibalism." This same producer shares a young mistress with his teenage son; surprisingly, the lively sexpot seems "at peace with herself and displayed a unity of mind and body that would confound philosophers." In such a *Photoplay* lotus land a hypochondriac businessman will naturally rhapsodize about the countless medicinal virtues of the avocado, and a Russian émigré will create a sculpture of Syrinx performing fellatio on Pan.

As in Frederick Exley's *A Fan's Notes* (that other modern classic of this mixed genre, the fictionalized memoir), the narrator's most complex relationship is with his father, who tries to toughen the boy up with boxing lessons and stretches in the steam room, the latter offering "all the attractions of the rack or the gibbet: shortness of breath and such instruction in the sadness of life's course as the sight of scars, boils, and shriveled parts can provide."

Like so many childhood reminiscences, this one ends with our narrator's liberation, as he goes forth "well-armed" into the world, or at least to Princeton. Darcy O'Brien himself went on to become first a teacher of modern Irish literature and then a true-crime author, best known for *Two of a Kind: The Hillside Stranglers* (1985). For this new paperback edition of *A Way of Life, Like Any Other*, O'Brien's old friend the poet Seamus Heaney—who apparently suggested the book's gently ironic title—provides a shrewd and affectionate introduction. —MICHAEL DIRDA

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"Half and Half"

Across. 1. SCISSOR (anag.) 7. HU(S)H 10. P + ACO 11. TRI(p) + VIA 12. JET + BOA + T 13. NEVE + R 14. OUTAGE (anag.) 15. E(LEG + IS)T 22. WINS + LOW 24. AC(C + E)PT (part anag.) 27. HUB + B + A 28. KNO(t)S + SOS 29. TOL + DON (for rev.) 30. EARL(y) 31. HO(S)TS 32. VANE + S + SA **Down.** 1. S + PINE 2. CAMEL + OT (to rev.) 3. (b)IC + (f)IVE + (c)UP 4. ST(ER)ILE 5. O + BTU + SE 6. FROU (anag.) 7. HI + AT US 8. SING (double def.) 9. HAVE(O)N 16. T(IN)HORN 17. CIL BLAS (anag.) 18. GOOBERS (anag.) 19. D + EARTH 20. B(L)ENDS 21. VIZ + S + LA 23. WALL + A 25. (s)CHOO(l) 26. POOH (rev.)

AN OBSERVER OF CATASTROPHE

In Sybille Bedford's work the great emotional and moral questions remain unanswered

BY BROOKE ALLEN

.....

Sybille Bedford, a German-born writer who has long lived in England, is not one of the twentieth century's best writers, but she is one of its most attractive literary curiosities. Born before World War I, she witnessed much of the tragedy, and enjoyed much of the beauty, that her volatile age had to offer.

Bedford spent her childhood and youth in her father's decrepit schloss in Baden, in the stuffy and well-upholstered Berlin residence of other relatives, in Fascist Italy, in high bohemia on the Côte d'Azur in the 1920s, and in England.

It was a rich and strange life, and in each of her four largely autobiographical novels she rendered its off-color luster and subtle moral gradations with humor and a remarkable tolerance that in no way implies an absence of judgment. The twentieth century displayed the human circus at its most grotesque, and Bedford had a ringside seat throughout the performance.

Bedford is not only a novelist but also the author of books on legal issues and famous trials, a biographer, and a light journalist specializing in sensual essays on food, wine, and travel, à la M.F.K. Fisher. Her *A Visit to Don Otavio: A Traveller's Tale From Mexico* (1953) is one of the most charming travel books ever written. Her *Aldous Huxley* (1973–1974) is still, after more than a quarter century, the definitive biography of the famous polymath, whom Bedford considered her literary and moral mentor.

Bedford's publishing history has done little to promote her name or reputation in the United States, where her books have appeared intermittently, under the aegis of different publishing houses, and have for the past ten years been out of print altogether. There has been no uniform American edition of Bedford's work until this year, with Counterpoint Press's reissue of her novels: *A Legacy* (1956), *A*

Favourite of the Gods (1963), *A Compass Error* (1968), and *Jigsaw: An Unsentimental Education* (1989). *A Visit to Don Otavio* will follow in 2002, along with a new collection of her essays on travel and gastronomy.

Everything Bedford has written is worth reading, but her reputation rightly rests on *A Legacy* and *Jigsaw* (short-listed for Britain's Booker Prize), for in these she draws most fully on her own

odd, isolated early childhood back in the schloss with her newly impoverished father and one faithful servant; later, reclaimed by her mother, she shuttled for years between England, where she was sent to be "educated" (in the very loosest sense of the word), and Sanary-sur-Mer, on the by then chic Côte d'Azur, where her mother had settled with a much younger, Italian husband.

A Legacy delves into the lives of Bedford's immediate forebears, interweaving their stories as they make their various ways through the more bizarre and exotic social circles of the Kaiser's Germany. The world she depicts is, as Evelyn Waugh wrote in the review that made Bedford's reputation, "far more remote than the Athens of Pericles or

the Rome of the Borgias," and it is described "with an air of authority which compels acceptance." In a letter to a friend the charmed Waugh wondered who this "brilliant 'Mrs Bedford'" could be: "A cosmopolitan military man, plainly, with a knowledge of parliamentary government and popular journalism, a dislike for Prussians, a liking for Jews, a belief that everyone speaks French in the home."

A Legacy is set at the end of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth, with Germany still

smarting from the birth pangs of unification. As the various German states are uncomfortably yoked together, so are the novel's three wildly different families, through marriage. The Feldens, like Bedford's paternal relations, are southern German aristocrats, anachronisms and dilettantes, relics of the eighteenth century.

The French Revolution was still alive with them as a calamity, and of the Industrial one they were not aware. Their home was Catholic Western Continental Europe, and the centre of

SNOWDEN



matchless experiences. Bedford's father's family were minor aristocrats from the southern German state of Baden, Catholic and agrarian, oriented toward Paris rather than Berlin; they regarded Prussia "as a barbarous menace and united Germany a new nonsense." During World War I young Sybille, nicknamed Billi, and her unhappily married parents shut up the schloss and moved to Berlin to live with the parents of her father's first wife. After the Armistice, Billi's mother, a restless Englishwoman, left Germany for good. Billi spent her

their world was France. They ignored, despised, and later dreaded, Prussia.

Where the Feldens are detached from the world and manifestly in decline, their neighbors the Bernins, into which family one of the Felden brothers marries, are political animals who devote their energies to the quixotic and irrelevant cause of the reunification of Christendom under the Catholic banner.

Added to this already highly flavored mixture is the Merz family, probably Bedford's finest creation. The Merzes are established members of Berlin's Jewish haute bourgeoisie, kind, complacent, and inconceivably narrow in their outlook and habits.

No music was heard at Voss Strasse outside the ball-room and the day nursery. They never travelled. They never went to the country. They never went anywhere, except to take a cure, and then they went in a private railway carriage, taking their own sheets ... The Merz's had no friends, a word they seldom used ... They did not go to shops. Things were sent to them on approval, and people came to them for fittings. They never read.

In a turn of events just outrageous enough to be real (as so often happens in good fiction, the most apparently extravagant characters turn out to be the ones drawn most faithfully from life), a marriage occurs between a Merz and a Felden. The misunderstandings between these two families, with their mutually exclusive world views, make for very high comedy. Here are the Merzes, for example, on first hearing their daughter's name coupled with that of Julius von Felden:

"Von?" said Grandpapa Merz. "Von? Got himself baptized, eh, like poor Flora's husband?"

"Of course he didn't get himself baptized," said Sarah.

"They won't give you the *von* if you don't get baptized. Refused it myself three times. Once to the old Kaiser, twice to Wilhem."

"The Barony in question was conferred by Ottomark the Bear," said Gottlieb.

"How do *you* know?" said Edu.

"I took the liberty of consulting the Almanach de Gotha last time I had occasion to be in your house, sir."

"We have always been jews," said Grandmama.

And the Feldens and the Bernins in a similar powwow:

"Israelites," said Gustavus, lowering his tone in spite of himself. "Presumably a papal title."

"Converts," said Clara. "Oh Conrad!"

"No title. *Not* converts. I shouldn't think they were christened."

There was a silence.

"Pious Jews—" said Clara. "It is well to remember the origin of our religion."

The negotiations are predictably painful; it is a case—not so unusual even today—of "theological dead-lock between non-practising members of two religions." Habits and prejudices are, as always, flatteringly disguised as values and traditions. The connection with the larger political deadlock of Wilhelmine Germany and of Europe in general can hardly be avoided. Bedford's fine sense of justice eventually tips the balance of *A Legacy* from farce to tragedy; her special subject has always been, as she puts it, "the links between private and mass catastrophe."

An old Felden family scandal is unearthed, and its reverberations shatter the ill-assembled Felden-Bernin-Merz alliance, much as the ill-assembled new Reich is soon to be shattered by the war it will help to ignite. In Bedford's canny narrative, political disaster, like the personal variety, is the inevitable result of pride and stupidity.

A Legacy is not a perfect book; Bedford is often technically awkward. Her method of narration is unconvincing, as are some of the characters; the conversations, particularly those that dominate the second half of the book, are drawn out and too obviously expository. Never mind; the source of our dissatisfaction is that Bedford's skill is not quite equal to the extraordinary nature of the material. And whose would be?

Her weaknesses are far more apparent in her next two novels, *A Favourite of the Gods* and *A Compass Error*. The first of these, though, is saved by a clever subplot in which Bedford effectively reversed the Jamesian archetype of American innocence and European experience, "the view of aristocratic Italian homelife as conveyed by high Anglo-



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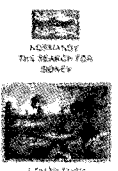
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**FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A
TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS**

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveal sloppy history, which gives a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care—transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides. It consists of 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things that Jesus said. Thus the notes were probably written down at the time heard and have not suffered alteration—the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. He provides all the text of the notes with comments and Marcan context, thereby developing a narrative of Jesus that is tenably historical.

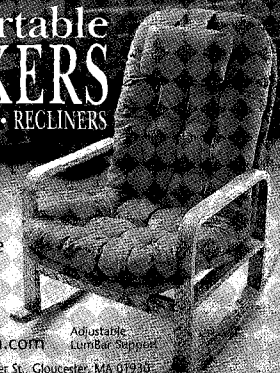
This historical Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy, not on Judaism with its fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws. Instead, this historical Jesus said, "Tell no lie and never do what you hate." This historical Jesus never mentioned a devil, demons, or hell.

The most radical difference, however, is that Epicureanism also shaped Jesus' thought that God and Caesar are man-made authorities, and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself. Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., \$12 postpaid.

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Saxon literature—those great tales of American heiresses corrupted, exploited and deprived in cold unions and *palazzi*." To this end she created a high-thinking but not really very plain-living New England heiress who wears her virtue—or is it simple asexuality?—like a badge of honor, and makes life hell for her trophy husband, a malleable, good-natured Roman prince. Bedford next turned her fictional talents to the re-creation of her life at Sanary during the 1920s, first with the unsatisfactory *A Compass Error* and then, more than twenty years later, with her marvelous and explicitly autobiographical *Jigsaw*.

"As no other place in Europe, no other place in the world," Bedford has

written, "France between the wars made one this present of the illusion of freedom." Although Bedford's life-long love for France never soured, the word "illusion" is nonetheless significant, and there is a distinct edge to her evocations of the apparently idyllic sensuality celebrated by her Sanary friends, a circle of artists and intellectuals that included Aldous and Maria Huxley, Thomas Mann and his family, and the painter Moise Kising. Here "freedom was the great thing, and it meant freedom from almost anything pre-war." As always in Bedford's fiction, there is a strong element of the travelogue. She enjoys life's little luxuries to the fullest, and her seductive mixing of Provencal scenery with Jazz Age and modernist legend caters to the seemingly perennial hunger for all things relating to France in the twenties, and also to the more recent obsession, fueled by Peter Mayle and Frances Mayes, with the good life as lived in Mediterranean Europe. But in Bedford's world the aesthetic pleasure of the landscape and

the open sexuality and affection of the bohemian newcomers to its shores are recognized as being, at least on one level, pure fantasy. Love, sex, friendship, are neither simple nor open. Instead they are complex, treacherous, often vicious. Bedford's experiences show that her set's ethos of honesty and free love did not work on the personal level—and in the end it did not work on the political

one either. Once again we are confronted with the "links between private and mass catastrophe"—in the repellent story of Billi's beautiful, intelligent, narcissistic mother and the slow movement of France toward moral and military collapse. The Sanary idyll that began so promisingly moves by stages to a grim conclusion. The uncomfortable interplay of family members and friends; the emotional education of Billi (unsentimental indeed!); the final, reluctant defection of her long-suffering young stepfather; the mother's appalling descent into drug addiction and her willful involvement of her daughter in her own degradation—all these events are described with grim exactitude and a surprising compassion.

Bedford's fictionalized memoirs come to an end at a moment of unsustainable tension between mother and daughter; the reader is left dissatisfied and deeply curious. Bedford is now at work, though, on a sequel to *Jigsaw*, titled *Quicksands*, to be published by Counterpoint in 2003. What new layers will be revealed? Bedford has never claimed to provide solutions; in her work the great emotional and moral questions remain unanswered. It is the oblique light she casts on them that gives her fiction its gentle, if cool, detachment and occasionally brings her close to penetrating the mystery of love and the peculiar forms it so often takes. ▀

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A COMPASS ERROR

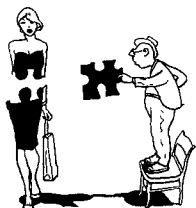
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**JIGSAW:
AN UNSENTIMENTAL
EDUCATION**

351 pages, \$15.00

by Sybille Bedford
Counterpoint Press

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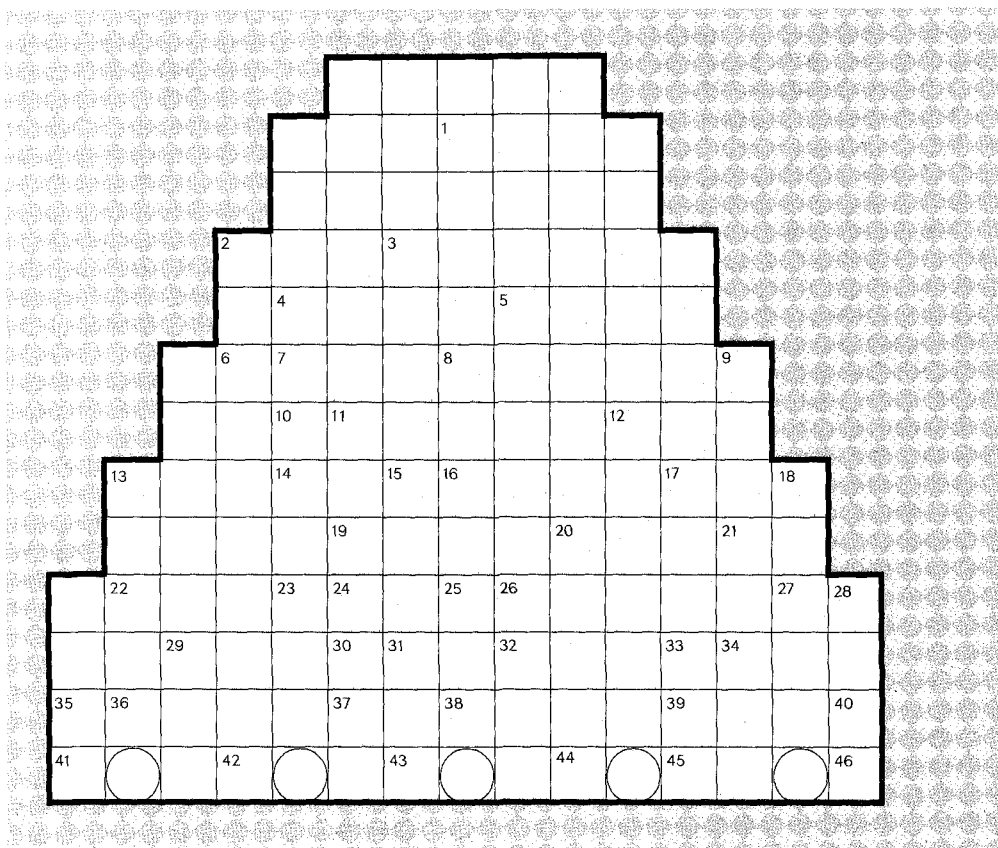
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Rock Climbing

The diagram represents a challenge to rock climbers. Answers to Trail clues start in the lower left and ascend row by row, alternately rightward and leftward, until they finish in the highest row but one. To confirm some of these Trail letters, answers to Guides clues should be entered in the numbered squares. Additionally, answers to Routes clues begin in the circles and ascend in zigzag fashion (angling up one square to the left or the right with each new letter). Routes include two or three words each and are clued in left-to-right order; they, too, finish in the highest row but one. If you append a final letter to each top-most Routes word so that a new word is formed, those five final letters will spell, left to right at the summit, the reward for all your hard work. Five clue answers are capitalized, as is one of the newly formed words reaching the summit.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 131



TRAIL

- a. Spot around Western rock formation was touching? (7)
- b. Climbing accident involving wild bats in straight pitch (8)
- c. Almost try move with grip from sticky rubber soles (8)
- d. Wrong hint about rope resistance (10)
- e. Conqueror of easier route (9)
- f. Reportedly looked hard, like some ascents (7)
- g. Deep crack in cliff's face holds cam, finally (5)
- h. Raven led "Cryptic" in purple (8)
- i. Rocky scattering in a carom (8)
- j. Cross section from east to west for little-known access (8)
- k. Slippery place is about right for tool with adjustable legs (8)
- l. Expose back to ground, gripped by fear, in test of a sort (5,3,5)
- m. Signs of nervousness following at high levels (6)
- n. Large round dome crookedly towered up (6)

- o. Stuff hauled out behind jumbled crag (5)
- p. Flight resulting from high gear I misplaced (6)
- q. Pull next to scary reptile? (6)
- r. Mixtures of tricky angles to the right of me (8)
- s. Rocky top includes glimpse of yeti? It's a mistake (4)

GUIDES

- t. Be careful around rock ridge having spires (30,10,22,26,21,12,40,4,43)
- u. Triangular wall includes grate that can be held (2,27,41,25,36,23,45,7,33)
- v. Fool around slope with climbing aid (39,5,11,37,14,17,20)
- w. Star of *Cliffhanger* completely trapped in rock (13,42,16,46,32,9,38,35)
- x. Awful spider, to a person in a high place (1,6,18,44,28,3,31,19)
- y. Stupid, like a ledge? (34,8,15,24,29)

ROUTES

- A. Pronounced rock steeper (6)
Disorganized moron carrying a cheese (6)
- B. First couple of tricams are of use, with hard work (7)
Rogue's unreliable scheme at top of peak (5)
- C. Instead of rock, hard plastic (7)
Worries and fears, after the start (5)
- D. Prickly feature hems in unskilled pretender (7)
Stuff that's sheer hard work at end of route (5)
- E. Start off rock at the end of the day (4)
Five books telling of Rockies' and Himalayas' beginnings (5)
Joke with piece of gold and silver (3)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD FUGITIVES

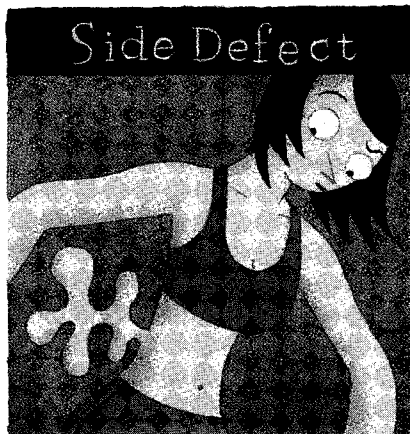
by BARBARA WALLRAFF

A problem caused by a blundering or heavy-handed attempt to cure another problem" was one of the word fugitives sought in the June *Atlantic*. Pat Bergeson, of Chicago, responded with *boomerwrong*; Joel Hess, of Portland, Oregon, with *blunderang*; and David Israel, of Santa Clara, California, with *solut* ("a little short of a solution"). Michael Dunlap, of Lake Oswego, Oregon, coined the nice *idiotrogenic*, but this word is an adjective, not a noun, as requested, and the related noun form, *idiotrogenesis*, is far afield from any word commonly seen. M. S. Coats, of Oregon City, Oregon, deserves special mention for submitting not one but two promising words: *ouchcome* and *oopshot*.

Some readers who responded enjoyed supplementing their coinages with examples. Jim Felde, of Concord, California, mentioned "attempting to pull out a tree stump by tying a rope to the car's bumper and thereby wrenching the latter from the vehicle" in the course of proposing *fixasco*. Richard Leeman, of Scotts Valley, California, told a story from his childhood: "On a cold winter day in Milwaukee, when our frozen car wouldn't start, my father laid some tarred hemp (oakum) on the ground under the engine and lit it. Within a couple of minutes the entire engine was ablaze." Leeman's suggested coinage was *delution*—an invention so similar in pronunciation to an existing word that if spoken it would surely be misunderstood, thereby exemplifying the very problem for which a name is being sought. As it happens, this was the case with a number of suggestions received, including *solvo*, submitted by Andy Hirth, of Columbia, Missouri; *botchulism*, submitted by four readers; *dissolution* or *dyssolution*, submitted by four readers; and *wrecktification*, also submitted by four. Or, as Maria Rhew, of Shady Hills, Florida, explained the situation in lobbying for her coinage, "Not

only is it apropos, but the potential confusion created by its pronunciation would continually contribute to the very need for its existence!" Right she is, and she takes top honors this time, for *side defect*.

The other fugitive sought in June was a word for "nostalgia for the future as envisioned in the past." Jimmy D. Schmidt, of Houston, responded by sending in a copy of an essay by Joris Nauwelaers that appeared last year in the medical journal *The Lancet*, which in turn cited a 1992 book, *Die Fliegenpein*, by Elias Canetti, that introduced



and defined the term *Eraritjaritjaka*: "an archaic, poetic expression in Aranda (an aboriginal tribe in Australia), which means: 'filled with desire for something that is lost'."

Leslie Franevsky, of Phoenix, coined the equally euphonious *protofuturisticexpialidocious*. This is an example of what Lewis Carroll, in *Through the Looking-Glass*, designated a portmanteau word: "Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy' ... You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." Other portmanteau words coined in response to this fugitive include *geewistfulness*, from Joe Mix, of Boonsboro, Maryland; *sigh-fi*, from Julia Coward, of Asheville, North Carolina; *O'erwellian*,

from Betty Sonders, of Oklahoma City; and *Nineteentyefouria*, from Michael Blossom, of Los Angeles. The creator of yet another portmanteau word earns top honors: Peter L. Stein, of San Francisco, for his submission *uhopia*.

NOW MICHAEL MURPHY, of Vancouver, British Columbia, writes: "What do you call it when an individual nods off for a few seconds and then jolts awake? I have observed this and also been a victim, falling asleep in a public situation only to draw attention to myself as I snap out of it as if in the electric chair. Any suggestions?"

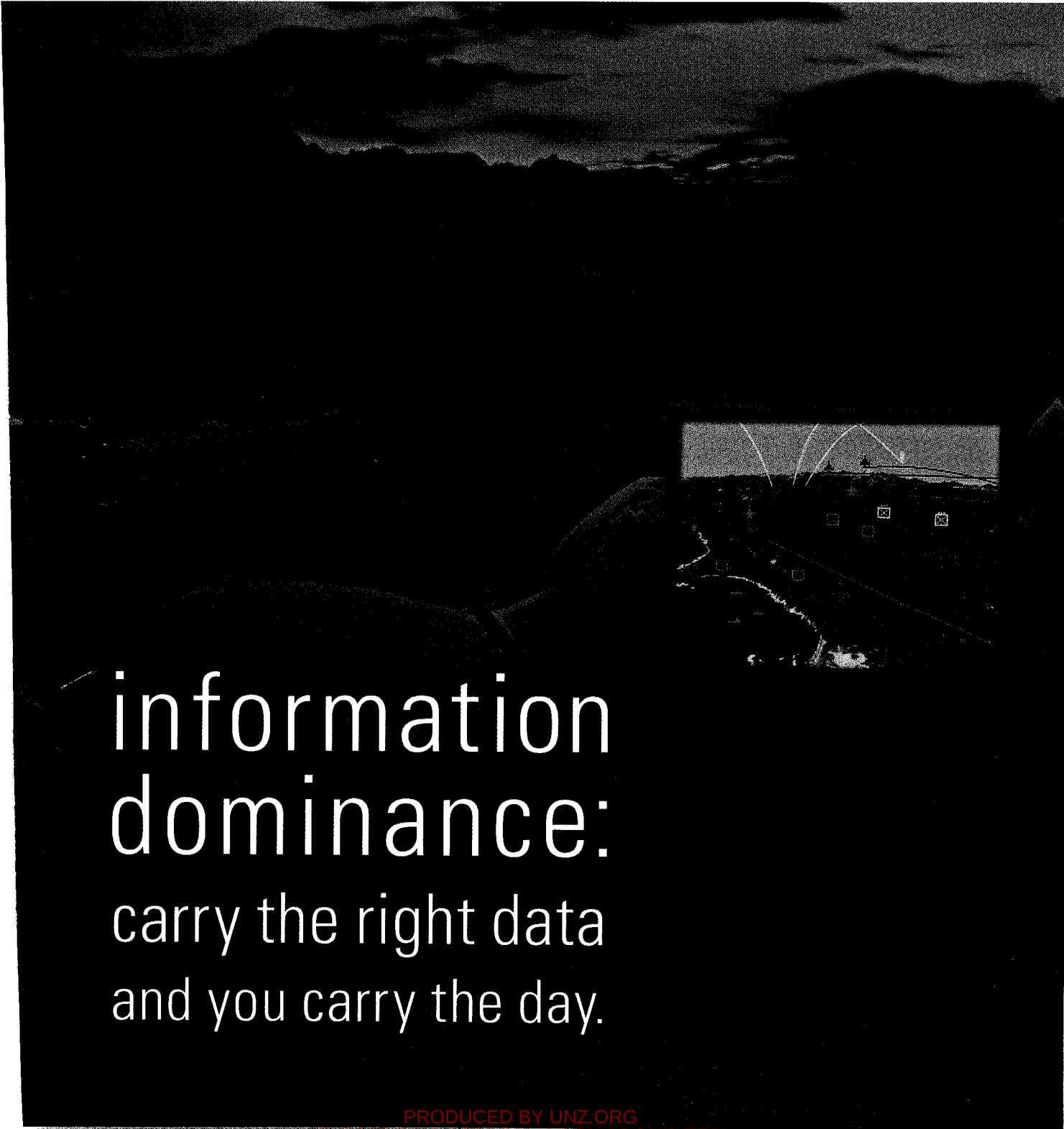
AND TIM CARR, of Atlanta, writes, "I'm a good speller, and a good typist. I'm also very good at math: I've been a professional statistician for thirty-plus years. My problem is that I'm terrible at transcribing numbers. To make a phone call, I have to put my finger on the number in the book and refer to it several times while dialing. Is there a word for my affliction?" Apparently there isn't—yet. *Dyscalculia* is a word, but it means "difficulty in solving math problems." And *dysnumia* probably shouldn't become a word, because it's too much like the medical term *dysnomia*, which means "difficulty in finding the right word or words." Is that what we're all experiencing just now?

Send words that meet Michael Murphy's or Tim Carr's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by October 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

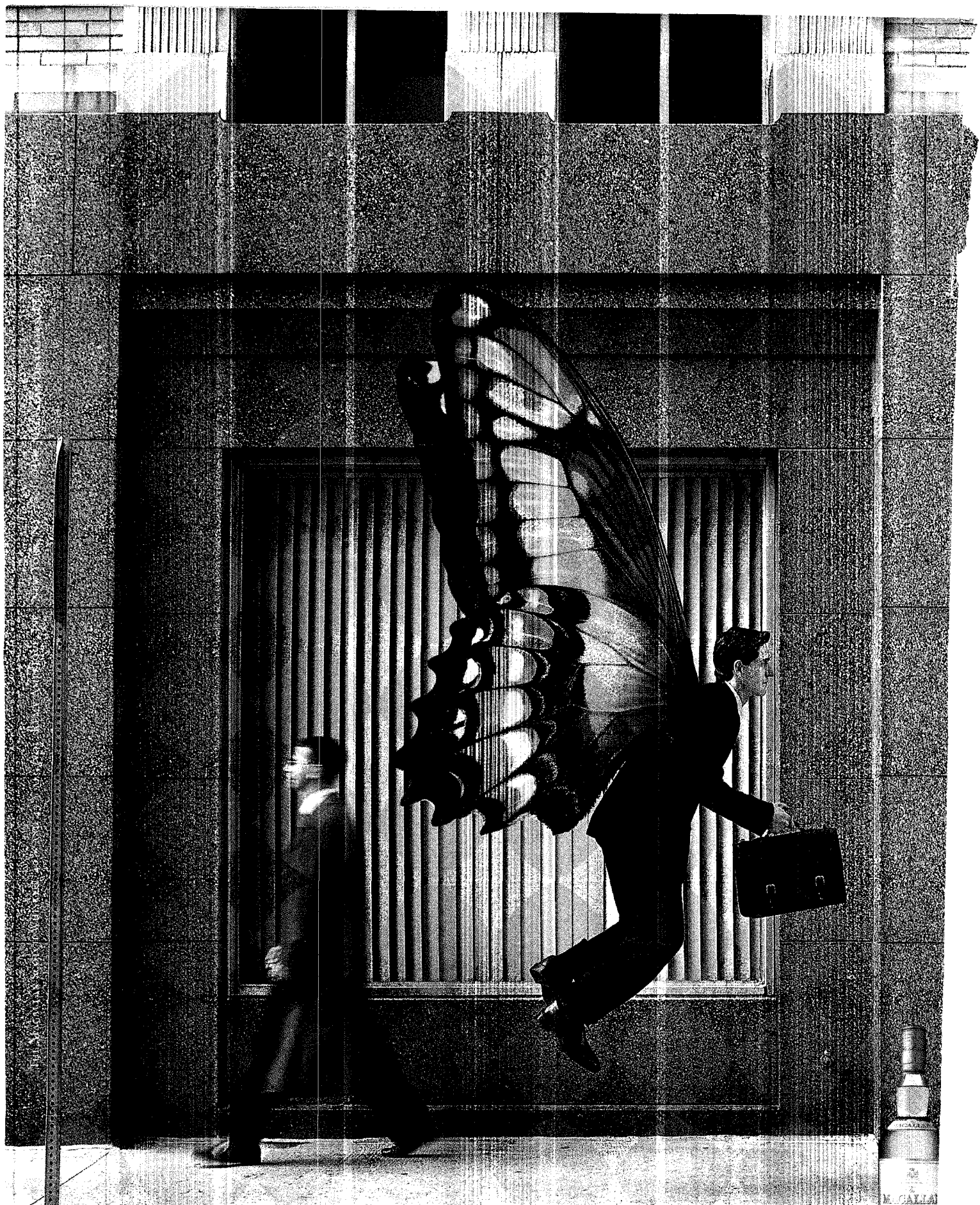
Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent Drowning Ruth, by Christina Schwarz; Fast Food Nation, by Eric Schlosser; and Free Flight, by James Fallows.



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